

The price of your own kingdom

- 1 Islands in the Sound of Harris, Outer Hebrides:**
Asking price: together, £750,000. Ensay alone (minus house) £500,000
What you get: 10 islands (approx 800 acres total), or Ensay alone (525 acres)
- 2 Isle of Pabay, off Skye:**
Asking price: £395,000 plus
What you get: 326 acres, 5-bedroom house with wind and solar power, farm buildings, jetty and harbour, licence to produce stamps
- 3 Island of Elgg, Inner Hebrides:**
Asking price: £2m plus
What you get: 7,350 acres (380 are woodland), Elgg Lodge (10 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms), 10 other holiday houses and cottages, three stock farms
- 4 Treshnish Isles, off Mull:**
Asking price: £500,000 plus
What you get: 320 acres among seven larger islands and numerous smaller islets
- 5 Thorne Island, off Pembrokeshire coast, west Wales:**
Asking price: £275,000
What you get: two acres, 19th century fort converted to hotel (10 bedrooms, 2 bars, outdoor jacuzzi and sauna), landing stage, roof terrace (could be helicopter pad)



For sale: Des Res island, all amenities, a snip for £1/4m. Suitable for recluses and paradise seekers



MATTHEW BRACE

For those searching for an island paradise in which to hide away and count their fortunes, Scotland is the destination. And to avoid the bad weather and the dark days that put the more remote rocky outcrops out of reach, the time to island-hunt is from May to August.

There are always a few Scottish islands for sale, but this year many more are on the market, prompting fears that the fragile culture of the Western Isles is being yet further eroded. At least 19 islands off Scotland's west coast are up for sale, some going for the same price as a three-bedroom house in London. Nine islands are available in the Inner Hebrides and 10 in the Outer Hebrides.

According to Charles Dudgeon, a partner with Savills estate agents in Edinburgh, normally there are only about two of three for sale in summer. "I find this year's number staggering," he said. "Some can't be worth the candle."

Estate agents, MacDonald MacIver & Co in Stornoway, selling the cluster of 10 Outer Hebridean islands, said they have never had so many on their books before.

One island, Pabay, in particular seems to fit the bill for the buyer who has everything else - "isolation, privacy and accessibility", according to Mr Dudgeon who is selling it for more than £395,000. Although it's a tiny windswept isle favoured in the past by thieves

and cut-throats, Pabay is hot property now, sheltering between the Isle of Skye and the mainland and still offering seclusion and adventure. The price, he adds, includes 326 acres, a farm with wind and solar power, a harbour, a jetty, and a willing boatman who needs just £50 (plus VAT) to take new residents the two miles to the island from Broadford on Skye.

Owning an island has its responsibilities, as well as its costs. Pabay has a licence to produce its own stamps and the island's owners are paid £1,250 a year by the Post Office to collect and deliver their own post over the sea to Skye.

The island of Elgg is also for sale, at £2m. Famous for its violent history and rugged scenery, it has a population of 60, including a doctor, postman and a school-teacher, with whom the owner must consult about island matters.

New owners of the Treshnish Isles, off the west coast of Mull, will have to knuckle under, too. The islands are designated not only a Site of Special Scientific Interest, but a Special Protection Area under the EC Wild Birds Directive.

William Jackson, a partner with Knight Frank estate agents in Edinburgh, said buyers must understand the commitment attached to taking on an island. "You are king but you have to obey the law of the land. You can't take these islands with you. You can't pick them up and carry them back to America." All 10 islands for

sale in the Outer Hebrides are being sold by the Mackenzies. After almost 70 years of ownership, their small fertile islands, in the Sound of Harris between Harris and North Uist, are on the market for £750,000. Ensay, the largest, has three heathes and an old burial ground.

Snapshots of Ensay, Saghay Beg, Saghay More, Suem, Sleicham, Groay, Lingay, Scaraway, Crago and Vatem could soon appear in newspapers' pocket-sized adverts between the more familiar "stunning rural cottages" in mid-Wales.

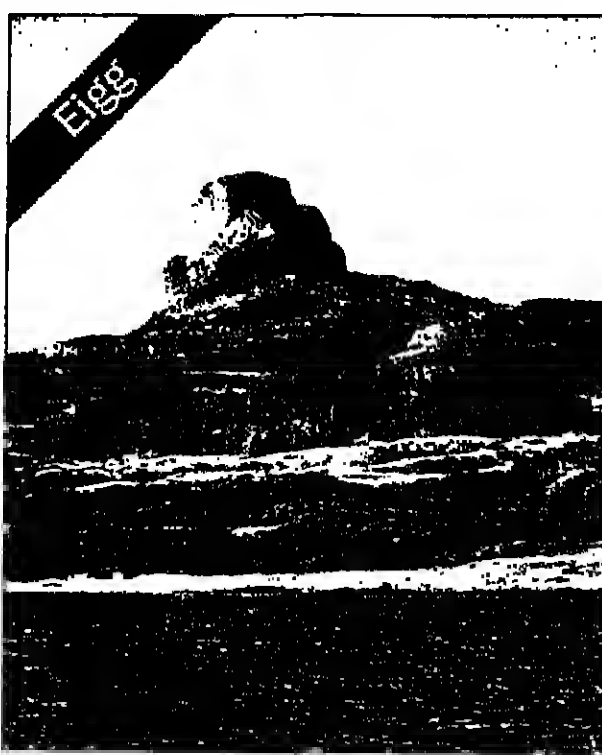
As it happens the only non-Scottish island for sale, is Thorne Island off the Pembrokeshire coast in west Wales, with two acres, a landing stage and a 19th-century fort as a 10-bedroom hotel.

In Wales and Scotland, the latest round of island sales worries local inhabitants and community groups. The Scottish Crofters' Union sees it as a threat to the livelihood and

culture of islanders. Ffion Mandeville, a member of the Union, said that though most of the islands for sale are uninhabited, island ownership is a lottery. "There are no constraints on who can buy, but the people here are never in the position to buy one themselves," she said. "They are very much at the mercy of the owners. But the time is coming when there will have to be a change in the land-ownership laws."

Dr James Hunter, a Skye resident and a writer about Highland ownership, said that land was sold and re-sold "with extraordinary rapidity" sometimes every two or three years. He said: "Some people who acquire an island have good intentions, they want to get involved, but then they realise how expensive it is. They get fed-up and put it back on the market again."

It is unlikely, though, that these arguments, will go any way to stopping the annual island hunt, now in full spate.



Road-rage pensioner jailed

A 69-year-old motorist was jailed for 18 months yesterday for stabbing another driver during a road rage row.

Former handyman, James Hopkinson, 69, was found guilty of unlawfully wounding Julian Gott, 45.

Mr Hopkinson stabbed Mr Gott, a surveyor, seven times with a penknife after he followed Mr Hopkinson's Citroën Visa car to a car park.

Mr Gott had been angry when Mr Hopkinson had cut in front of his BMW 325 in the outside lane of Stanningley bypass in Leeds last September.

He said he went after Mr Hopkinson "on the spur of the moment, to give him a mouthful" about his allegedly dangerous driving.

Leeds Crown Court was told that Mr Hopkinson struck Mr Gott on the side of the head and thrust a folding penknife into his stomach.

Mr Gott still has scars on his abdomen and thigh, but has otherwise made a full physical recovery after the attack, which took place in Pudsey railway station car park at 6.55pm on 8 September, 1995.

Mr Gott told how he was bleeding profusely from his wounds, but managed to drive to the Owlcoats shopping centre, 200 yards from the station. Two women trained in first aid at Asda supermarket helped him while "horrified" shoppers looked on.

Judge John Swanson told Mr Hopkinson: "Violence arising from disputes between motorists in cars will normally

result in a prison sentence. When the facts are accompanied by a weapon - as in your case - the sentence must be substantial."

"I take into account your age, health and the fact that another jury has already acquitted you of the far more serious offence of wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm."

"Mr Gott acted foolishly. If he had not followed you, this incident would not have happened."

"I do not treat you as a man with a record of violence," added the judge.

Mr Gott lives in Burley-in-Wharfedale, a village in the hills north of Leeds.

Mr Hopkinson, who has three children, lives at Cavendish Square in Pudsey, Leeds, with his wife.

Leeds Crown Court heard how Mr Hopkinson had already served five years for two charges of felonious wounding and burglary in 1956. He was convicted that year at Leeds Assizes Court.

He also had convictions for reckless driving, in 1983 and 1985.

After yesterday's hearing, Detective Sergeant Colin Buck of West Yorkshire police said: "I think it's a just verdict."

"The evidence showed the defendant reacted to the situation in a manner more violent than necessary."

Det Sgt Buck warned all motorists to avoid road rage outbursts if possible. "One driver nearly lost his life. Another lost his liberty. It's better just to drive on and let common sense prevail."

THE INDEPENDENT
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There's a great deal going on

I'm digging for victory ...wish you were here

Dear Tony,
This is just to show that while you're sunning yourself in Geoffrey Robinson's £3m mansion in Tuscany, I'm hard at it, fighting for a Labour victory on the beach at Cleethorpes.
The weather here is a bit overcast, but the natives are friendly. They lapped up our campaign against "Tory lies", and I handed out bucket-loads of Labour campaign rock and whirly hats.
You should have seen the press I got this morning for my handling of the Clare Short row. Even the *Guardian* said I'd beaten Peter Mandelson at the spin doctoring.
On the seafloor, I managed to sidestep questions about Clare's article in the *New Statesman*. I told the press: "Cleethorpes is a key seat and we've got to make sure we win it. That's why I'm here."
I'm sending out letters to Labour MPs with the "spirit

of '45" pamphlet as we agreed, emphasising the continuity between New Labour and the post-war Attlee government, which ushered in the Welfare State. With your foreword, I'm drawing attention to the five evils, identified in the Beveridge report, of want, ignorance, disease, squalor and idleness, which the Attlee administration set out to tackle.
So you can see, New Labour is in safe hands while you're away. But I should warn you that there are some storm clouds on the horizon.
The opinion polls have been as mixed as the weather while you've been away. The *Guardian* ICM poll said our lead had slipped to 12 points, while Gallup in the *Tory Telegraph* said it had slipped to 25 points. Peter Kellner in the *Evening Standard* said our lead over the Tories was probably about 20 points, so there's no room for complacency, as you're constantly telling us.

The resolutions for the TUC conference in September show that the unions are trying to make sure that we commit ourselves to a fixed figure of £426 an hour. Arthur Scargill is also going to be there, banging the drum about scrapping all the Tory trade union legislation. Labour activists are being urged by Labour CND to put forward motions at the Labour Party conference in October calling for the £21bn defence budget to be cut by a third under a Labour government. We've shrugged off past conference resolutions by CND supporters, but in the run-up to the election I know you'll want to ensure the Tories don't accuse of being weak on defence. No doubt the press will report it as "Macho Blair faces backlash", but by then, you'll be back. By the way, next week I'm off to America to meet one of my friends in the Democrats. I'll bring you a stick of rock.
Yours, John



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Labour fears for privatised rail safety

MICHAEL STREETER

Labour called yesterday for urgent publication of an interim inquiry report into the Watford train crash, amid rising concern that privatising the railways may have reduced safety standards.

The crash, which occurred when a commuter train hit an empty stock train, killing one person and injuring 68 others, was the first involving a passenger train since Railtrack was privatised earlier this year.

Although Labour is anxious not to pre-empt any investigation into the causes of the accident, it fears that the results of two inquiries launched yesterday may not be published until after the general election. This would let the Government off the hook, if underfunding and privatisation are found to be contributory factors.

As inquiries by the Health and Safety Executive's Railway Inspectorate and Railtrack were announced, Labour's transport spokeswoman, Glenda Jackson, said: "Ministers must state clearly how and when the full facts of this incident are to be made public. Given the speculation concerning the possible contribution of privatisation ... it is unacceptable that we may have to wait for over a year before the truth emerges."

The HSE confirmed that the effects of privatisation would be part of their remit.

The Transport Secretary, Sir George Young, rejected suggestions that privatisation had impaired safety.

"There is no evidence that the privatisation process or the restructuring of the railways has in any way diminished their safety record," he said. "On the contrary, the evidence is that the safety record has actually improved."

A key issue highlighted by railways experts was the decision, by the Government, BR and then Railtrack, to shelve plans for an automatic train protection system (ATP) which stops the train if a driver goes through a red light.

Last month the Commons Transport Select Committee described this decision, made before the end of two pilot schemes, as "deeply deplorable". Labour claims ATP's estimated £1bn cost should be set against the more than £2bn spent on rail privatisation.

There was also concern about the state of the West Coast line, on which the crash occurred, with one expert describing it as "sadly neglected".

Yesterday there was growing suspicion that the crash of the 17.04 Easton to Milton Keynes may have been caused by one driver going through a red light. Privately, Railtrack has reportedly been reassuring the City that initial indications point to "driver error".

The crucial final moments before the collision will have been recorded on the trains' "black boxes", which will give investigators details of the speeds, drivers' actions, and data on signals and controls. First reports suggested that the empty train may have been travelling at up to 50 mph.

Worries over effect of sell-off

Is privatisation likely to have been a major factor behind the crash? So far, figures suggest overall safety has not worsened under privatisation and may even have improved. Railtrack, which owns the track and stations, says fixed contracts with maintenance staff have helped put safety concerns on a more formal and thus better level.

Does that mean there are no safety concerns after privatisation?

Far from it: there is a growing anecdotal evidence that contractors doing vital track maintenance are sub-contracting to inexperienced or incompetent staff. The Health and Safety Executive severely criticised Railtrack this year for weaknesses in management and safety systems which could make future travel less safe. Railtrack's own recent figures show that while there were no major injuries last year, the number of small injuries rose by 13 per cent to 171. The company says a number of these were "drink-related", such as passengers falling off platforms.

How much is being invested by Railtrack?

It plans to invest £1bn a year for 10 years, which it calls the biggest concentration of funds ever on infrastructure. However, railway unions and Independent

experts say Railtrack spends money half as efficiently as BR. In other words, £1bn in Railtrack money would be £500m in BR money. Wolfson College's railway expert, Bill Bradshaw, has described the West Coast track as "sadly neglected". Railtrack is spending "millions" on it but admits no more than on any other line. Discussions are still going on about raising new cash to upgrade it.

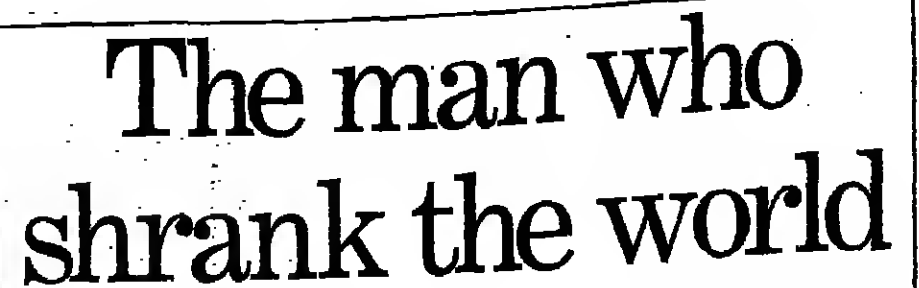
What are the most likely causes of the crash?

A mistake by a driver or a signalling error will be the main focal points of the inquiries. Drivers can sometimes be afflicted by "micro sleep", when through tiredness and repetition they can "miss" a red light. A signal error is more often a result of human error than a fault in the signal system.

Would ATP have helped?

Automatic Train Protection is an expensive system which prevents trains going through red lights and overrides driver error. BR and now Railtrack have rejected it on grounds of cost - up to £1bn. Sub-Channel rail travellers are protected by ATP on the French side but not when the enter Britain. Some independent experts say it is not cost-effective, at £14m per life saved, and more lives would be saved by spending the cash on modern carriages.

هكذا من الاصل



The death of Sir Frank Whittle has deprived us of a rare talent, writes **Charles Arthur**

life described him as "the father of the jet age".
Born in Coventry in June, 1907, Sir Frank's origins were solidly British and working class. He was also one of the last survivors from what is often seen as a golden age of British invention.

which put Britain at the forefront of the jet age, arose from his science thesis, written in 1928, when he was a young cadet at RAF Cranwell. He patented the idea of the jet engine in 1930, but found the road to success paved with in-

Jet fighter aircraft finally entered service in 1944, but Sir Frank always maintained they could have been used against Hitler years earlier in the Battle of Britain, but for

The first jet engines did not go into production until 1947, after the Second World War. Sir Frank's plans, meanwhile, went to the US, which used them for its entire post-war aircraft industry. He later bitterly criticised the nation-

Sir Frank was knighted in 1948 and received a reward of £100,000 for his contribution to flight. In the same year, he retired from the RAF, with the rank of Air Commodore, on the grounds of ill-health.

CHARLES ARTHUR
Science Editor

up the Perseid shower weigh about 50 milligrams and measure just 5 millimetres in diameter. They hit the Earth's atmosphere at 133,000 mph, where friction causes them to burn up before they reach the planet's surface.

Observers can watch the meteorites with binoculars, picture them with a camera set for a long exposure with high-speed

The annual Perseid shower has been known since 830 AD. It was known as the "Tears of St Lawrence", after a saint who was burnt at the stake in 253 AD. The intensity of the showers has intensified since 1992, when the parent comet, which follows a fixed, hyperbolic or-

Jacqueline Mitton, of the Royal Astronomical Society, said: "The peak of the stream can be very concentrated. The Earth can pass through it in one hour or less, with not much activity on either side. It's not totally predictable."

derived from the constellation from which they seem to emanate - Perseus - which can usually be seen low in the northeast after sunset. The best time for viewing will probably be between midnight and 2am on Sunday night.

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Refugees flee as battle rages in Grozny

They walked around the Russian posts on the ap-



Street fighter: A Chechen rebel just after firing a rocket launcher during fierce fighting for the control of central Grozny Photograph: Robert King/AP

"Swines," one fighter muttered under his breath. He had said the same earlier, when Russian jets unleashed a series

Chechen forces completely controlled the city, he said.

The fighters would stay "as long as it takes," he said, by seizing ammunition from the

A veteran of 12 months' fighting in Chechnya, he shrugged his shoulders over the incident. "We are softening them up with artillery and then we will go in and finish off what we left [standing] last time," he

Sergei Trofimov, a correspondent of Tass, said the group had been joined by five women and a child, who had braved "a hurricane of fire" in order to reach the basement of the government hostel.

The 65-year-old leader, who had not been seen in public since a week before his reelection on 3 July, looked stiff as he walked along a red carpet to a stage in the Kremlin Palace. But he pronounced his oath clearly and stood for 15 minutes while the Russian Orthodox Patriarch, Alexy II, blessed him.

Thus, the chances are that Mr. Yeltsin will be able to go on holiday shortly, leaving Mr. Chernomyrdin to deal with Chechnya. But the prospects are not bright for an early resumption of the peace process and many politicians in Moscow now admit there is no alternative to a negotiated settlement.

Drugs hitch

One of the more imperishable moments of his visit came when he met Lebanon's Prime Minister, Rafiq Hariri, who had no role in the civil war. Anderson stood to greet the ruler of the country in which he was held captive, Mr Hariri advanced with outstretched hands just a hint of a smile on his face wondering how to frame his greeting. Then, after a slight hesitation, Mr Hariri said quietly: "Welcome back."

Prisoner of time shrugs off his seven-year hitch

Robert Fisk in Beirut welcomes back his colleague Terry Anderson, who was the longest-held hostage in Lebanon

"You know, later, when I was in my cell at Hay el-Selum, I was so close to the runway that I

abduction 11 years ago. I had told him then that it was better to fight a kidnapper. He had in-

He journeyed through Lebanon with his Lebanese wife, Madeleine; their daughter

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it would really be a waste. I've

No regrets: Terry Anderson

back in Beirut yesterday for the

a first time since 1991

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No regrets: Terry Anderson back in Beirut yesterday for the first time since 1991

India defiant over nuclear test ban treaty

India is refusing to sign a global treaty to ban nuclear test explosions, despite pressure from Britain, the United States and other major nuclear powers.

Pressure from the major powers has had little impact, writes Tim McGirk in New Delhi

CTBT also went a step further, binding countries to strict on-site inspections of nuclear installations by UN officials. But India - which is considered to be a "threshold" nuclear power, along with Pakistan and Israel - is balking at the proposed treaty. The country has two hostile nuclear neighbours, China and Pakistan, and wants to keep the option of building its own atomic arsenal and carrying out underground tests. The threat of possible sanctions and widespread condemnation is unlikely to sway India into signing the test ban treaty, according to New Delhi officials.

New Delhi officials said India's objections to the CTBT are too strong for it simply to abstain from signing the pact before the Geneva conference ends on 15 August. The Clinton Administration would be co-opted if India did not block the CTBT's passage. Otherwise, an Indian veto could either stop the treaty outright or cause it quickly to unravel.

Meanwhile, Japan recalls its own nuclear history



Japan remembers: Metro police trying to remove people who staged an illegal 'die-in' demonstration in front of the Chinese embassy in Tokyo yesterday, the 51st anniversary of the A-bomb blast in Nagasaki. They were protesting against China's nuclear test on 29 July. Photograph: AFP

zny
ictory
eltsin's
pomp

"Thank God," said one Russian as he watched the procession on television. "I was glad that he was going to fall."

Officials studied the coronation of the last Tsar to get inspiration

which was a little less than the usual one. Then he had a few glasses of champagne and he looked at the brightly lit when he walked.

rugs
itch

Bulonic, was born in their... after his... the task is to take the... have happened to... one of them in... he said. "We have... we would not have... been in any way... of what they did... here today because... thing that has happened... of us. The... brought us to the... a good place to... later, he will meet... of the... the... minute... to his... day. But he... information. "Twenty... but they say, to... down with... One of the... moments of... he met... minister, R... of no role in the... stood... of the... a... with... a... of a... how... Then... a... Mr... "Welcome..."



SIGNIFICANT SHORTS

The number of boat people to have returned voluntarily to Vietnam from Hoog Koog has passed the 50,000 mark, bringing a bitter saga that has plagued Asia for years one step closer to an end. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees marked the occasion by singling out an official 50,000th migrant from three hundred arriving on two flights at Hanoi airport, showering him and his family with gifts and a bouquet of flowers. Most of the returnees looked glum and passive as they filed into the airport terminal. *Reuters - Hanoi*

The FBI denied a television report that it had found no evidence linking the security guard Richard Jewell to the Olympic Park bombing and planned a public apology. A spokesman said that his superiors in Washington denied the report on the CBS network. Mr Jewell was initially hailed as a hero for spotting the bomb before it detonated, but later came under scrutiny by authorities. *AP - New York*

Legions of rescuers continued their search for the bodies of holidaymakers carried away when a torrent of mud and rocks swept through a crowded Spanish campsite. The mudslide, triggered by heavy rains on Wednesday night, killed at least 76 people and injured scores more. It was feared the death-toll could reach more than 100. *Reuters - Biscaya*

West African music lover are mourning ET Mensah, the Ghanaian pharmacist who refined the dance-band style that swept the region in the 1950s and 60s. Emmanuel Tetteh Mensah, ET to fans, died in his sleep aged 78. A trumpet player who doubled on saxophone, he starred with Louis Armstrong during celebrations for Ghana's independence in 1957. *Reuters - Accra*

Two Bulgarian prostitutes stole a truck loaded with lingerie in the hope of selling it after a session with the vehicle's Turkish driver. The Cypriot twins drove 20 miles before police caught up with them. They were having difficulty driving the vehicle. The women stole the truck after its driver went to the lavatory. *Reuters - Sofia*

Israel's Foreign Minister, David Levy, locked in a power struggle with the Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, did not arrive for work at the Foreign Ministry and missed the weekly cabinet meeting. The two rivals have been averaging a spat a month since they came to power in June at the head of a right-wing government. *Reuters - Jerusalem*

A one-and-a-half-year-old girl died of food poisoning in Aomori, Japan, bringing deaths from a germ to eight. The O-157 colic bacillus is responsible for a food-poisoning epidemic that has hit the city of Sakai, near Osaka, in western Japan, hardest, with 6,500 patients, mostly school children, affected. *Reuters - Tokyo*

Villagers in eastern Laos have captured a saola, a rare mammal similar to an antelope whose existence was discovered four years ago. Saola, which means "spindle" in a Thai tribal dialect, is a large-hoofed mammal with long, spindle-shaped horns. It is also known as the Vu Quang ox, after the forest reserve in Vietnam where it was first discovered. *AP - Bangkok*

Police questioned Megawati Sukarnoputri, the Indonesian opposition leader, for more than six hours in connection with last month's riots in Jakarta and she said she has been called back next week. "I have been summoned again on 15 August for additional questioning," Ms Megawati said at her home after returning from Jakarta police headquarters. Several opposition members are still in custody after the riots. *Reuters - Jakarta*

Ukrainian and Polish scientists found a tomb of a Scythian commander containing 1,000 gold and silver decorations and weapons, the such burial site found since 1830. The Scythians founded a kingdom on the Black Sea coast that fell in the 3rd century BC. *AP - Kiev*

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international

Stink robs Siberian express of its magic

It is hot, and getting hotter. The air is as thick and clinging as the smug in a crowded British pub on a Sunday lunchtime. And it smells.

The four of us in this tiny compartment know why. Nikolai, one of our company, has a supply of raw fish wrapped in newspaper under his bed.

Half an hour ago, not for the first time, he dug out a couple, gutted them on a cloth on his bed and, with the air of a cordon bleu chef preparing a particularly special dish, chopped them up for us to eat.

He is a genial, middle-aged man, with the fixed smile of a cat and a shiny blue shell suit that would stand out on the Strip in Las Vegas. For the last two days, as our train sidled slowly across the contours of Russia's stomach, he has regaled us with stories about his life as a factory official in Irkutsk in eastern Siberia. But the fish is a problem.

World's longest ride is no joke when raw fish are on board, writes Phil Reeves

to have storms which never reach its shores, 50 million years old (ancient enough for 1,500 endemic species), more than a mile deep, repository of a fifth of the world's fresh water supply and its own species of seal, the nerpa.

But these figures, and the lake's hazy beauty, have been joggled to the back drawers of the memory by the slow lollap of the last 1,400 miles. Only one detail looms large: it was there, during a brief stop in a small settlement on the lake's shore, that Nikolai bought his food supplies. Baikal is the only place on the planet where you can find the golomyanka fish, which dissolves into an oily blob when brought to the surface. Unfortunately, Nikolai bought "ornu". They have remained intact.

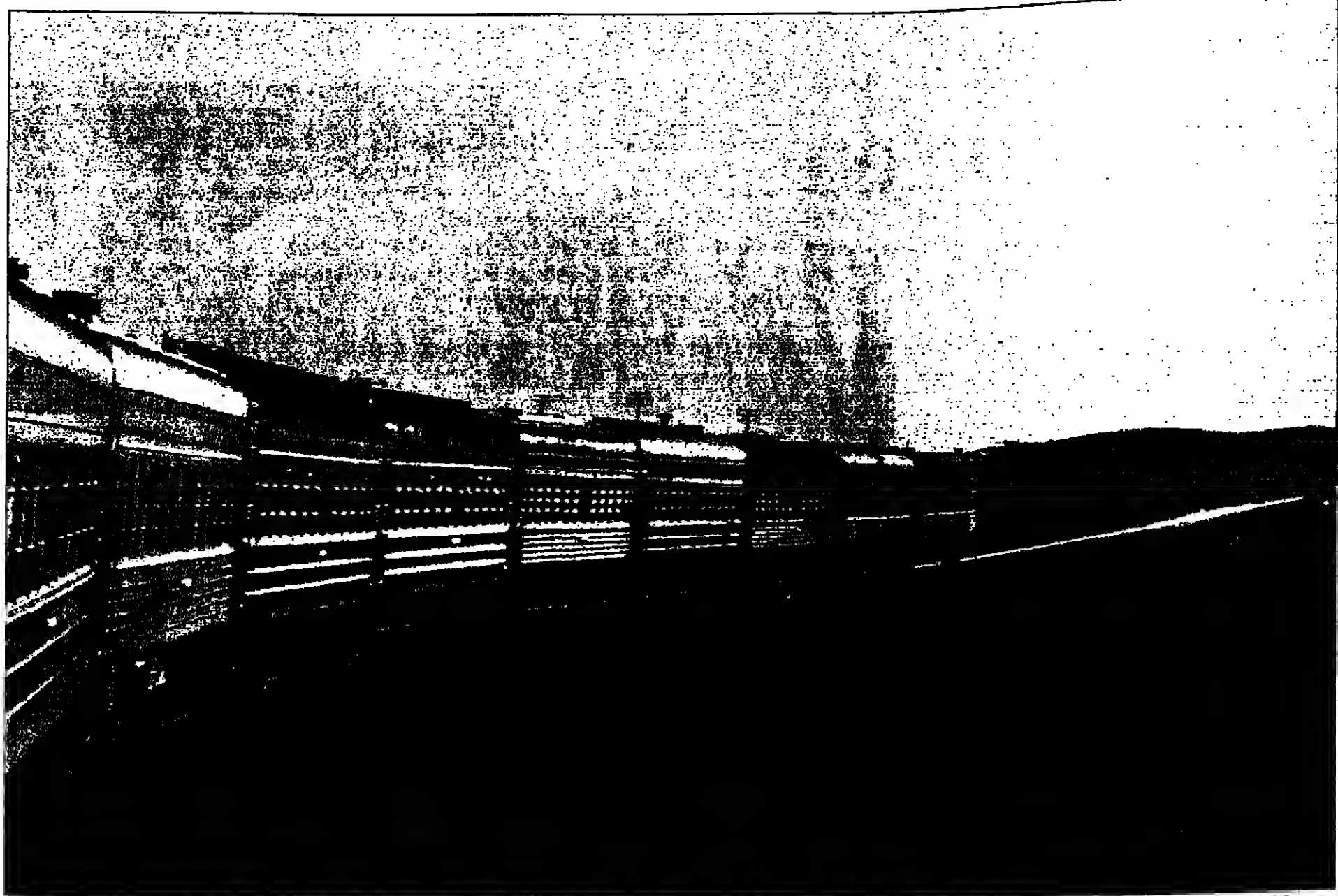
There is no point in complaining about the stench to Marina, the bored-looking peroxide-haired carriage attendant. The windows of our German-made carriage cannot be opened, as it is supposedly air-conditioned. Her principal task seems to be to hoover the carriage every 24 hours or so, usually when we are nodding off. Nor is there much evidence that she is on the ball: she has been spotted wandering the corridors in a long crimson dressing gown, well after dark, with her locks in curlers.

But, then, no-one on the train seems to know the time. Small knots of people gather in the corridor to study a timetable on the wall, trying to relocate themselves in the surreal vacuum that has evolved since the train set off.

There is a clock showing Moscow time, but it doesn't help much: we are running late, and most of the passengers have started from a different point on the seven time zones through which the train passes on its 5,778-mile journey from Moscow, across the Urals and Siberia, to Vladivostok and the Sea of Japan - the longest continuous rail journey in the world. Very few people seem to be travelling the whole way. For most, the calculations become too complicated to be worth the bother.

Outside, the "taiga", the endless forests of silver firs, cedars, birches and pines, has given way to the softer, flatter landscape of the far, Far East. Every now and then we pass a cluster of wooden bungalows, their mud lanes littered with the detritus of Soviet farming equipment. It looks as old as the railway we are riding, which was inaugurated in 1891, under Tsar Alexander III. The faces of the few residents grower wider, testimony to the proximity of Mongolia and China. But neither these, nor the grey sky overhead, offer many clues. Nikolai is convinced it is Tuesday; I know it is Wednesday.

As we argue, Nikolai pours from a vodka bottle on the table. When I boarded in Irkutsk two days ago, I believed this warm, acidic liquid to be the real thing, until I discovered him topping it up from an unmarked plastic container in his luggage. "Medicinal spirit," he explained. "Now, I have got this neighbour, who loves hunting..."



Track record: Built by the Tsar in the 1890s, the trail link crosses seven time zones before completing its 5,778-mile journey

Photograph: Frank Spooner/Gamma



RIDING THE IRON ROAD

We have heard about how he once shot, and ate, a bear in the forest, and later went hunting for wild boar. He has described fishing through the ice that each winter covers nearby Lake Baikal to such depths that, during the 1904 war with Japan, the Russians laid a railway across its frozen girth and shunted equipment back and forth.

The track hooks around its southern shores, so several days ago we saw the lake for ourselves, a vast grey-blue sheen, the size of Belgium. The guide book overflowed with statistics: it's 400 miles long (large enough



Fin pickings: Nikolai sharing out his supply of pungent raw fish

Photograph: Phil Reeves

There is, of course, a great deal of drinking. The other day a group of Russian army officers, their bellies awash with booze, held a press-up contest with a young British civil servant during a station stop. The Briton, a tourist en route to

Japan, later told me he had "lost" two days of the seven and a half day journey from Moscow.

But in an environment in which everyone shares everything, drinks are as hard to refuse as food. In the hope of

enthusiastic, but they sample it politely.

Russians, long used to cramped apartments, are good at this kind of collective living. Our four-berth second class compartment is only six feet wide and seven feet deep. But my companions move easily among themselves as if they were somewhere four times as large. When one of us is making up a bed, or changing clothes, the others automatically slip into the corridor, without exchanging a word. I am the only clumsy one. A couple of hours ago, a large pepperoni sausage fell from my bunk onto the head of one of the women.

Yet there are few places to which to escape these kinds of embarrassments. You can perch on the small, fold-down plastic seat in the corridor, although not without feeling foolish. You can also retreat to the restaurant car, although very few of the mostly Russian passengers on this train go there, not least because, for many, a plate of stinky chicken and a beer costs the equivalent of a day's pay.

One visit was enough to discover that serving food was not high among the staff's priorities, although they were keen to sell

the gas masks which they claimed to have been issued in the (unlikely) event of a gas attack by Chechen terrorists. The rate was six dollars, a strikingly better bargain than the \$30 that one carriage attendant wanted to charge a tourist for his metal tea-cup holder, or the \$10 he wanted for attaching a shower nozzle to the tap in the grubby wagon lavatory.

The restaurant car is the fiefdom of Mikhail and Sasha who, when they are not selling huge quantities of liquor to villagers at each station, wait for foreigners like me to wander in to relieve the boredom.

"Are you English?" demanded Mikhail. "What happened to your football team?" he said, before, somewhat contradictorily, renouncing Gazza's goal against Scotland in the space between the empty tables. "Why is England good at nothing these days? You haven't got a number-one skier, tennis player, skater, ice-hockey player, boxer. Name one!"

There was a pause, and his mind turned anew to business. "Would you like me to find you a woman?" As the Russians say, "Pura life": time to get back to Nikolai's fish.

Dole pulls tax cuts out of the hat for California

Roger Hedgecock seemed to be in shock. The former Republican mayor turned talk-show host was broadcasting live from outside the hall where the Republicans spent much of last week debating their party's stand on abortion. Mr Hedgecock had invited Jeff White, an anti-abortion crusader with Operation Rescue, to join him, but things had not turned out quite the way he planned.

Mr Hedgecock's conservative credentials are impeccable. For two days last week he stood in for Rush Limbaugh, the giant of right-wing talk radio. But during this broadcast his guest had produced two, four-foot wide pictures of an 21-week aborted foetus, allegedly taken from an abortion clinic's trash. "Good grief," said Mr Hedgecock. "I don't need to be shown a lot of gore to be convinced."

The party truly begins for California's Republicans today, as a train carrying the State's delegation begins winding its way down the coast to San Diego. For the convention crowd, the Republicans' bash at Planet Hollywood restaurant tonight has been declared the place to be seen.

Yet there was evidence of

Republicans are hoping to win the West coast, but abortion divides them, reports Tim Cornwell in San Diego

discomfort in this city known for its steady Republicanism, with both abortion as an issue and Bob Dole as a candidate. "California's delegation by two-to-one is pro-choice," said Steve Cushman, a long time Republican and chairman of the San Diego Chamber of Commerce.

Ronald Reagan called San Diego his "lucky city", the place where he chose to end his campaigns. Last week, as Bob Dole reached for the great communicator's mantle with his promise of sweeping tax cuts, Republicans in Reagan country were thrilled by the old anti-tax message. But they were looking askance at the messenger.

Eighty miles north in Orange County, the conservative bastion of California, the party-line was being hung out: that though Dole would lose heavily in the State today, the campaign has yet to start, and he will get a huge injection of campaign funds when he is officially declared candidate. "The enthusiasm is growing," insisted Dale

Dykema, president of the Lincoln Club, whose 350 members must have donated at least \$1,500 each to the Republican Party. "If we can swing California, Bob Dole is president."

The Lincoln Club is spending \$50,000 to get the vote in Orange County, which traditionally has helped to swing the State's vote. It is hoping to use support for the California Civil Rights Initiative - a ballot proposal that opposes affirmative action - to draw conservatives to the booths on polling day.

San Diego's conservatism is noted in defence with naval and air bases making military the city's second largest industry. But Republicans are still smarting from 1992, when the county went for Bill Clinton with the vote split by a 25 per cent vote for Ross Perot.

The Republicans are now swamping the hotels at the height of San Diego's tourist season. Mr Dole's promise of 15 per cent income tax-cuts will

go down well in a city where earnings are well above the national average, and whose economic engine is the entrepreneurial high-tech industry, according to long-time Republican consultant Jack Orr. Clinton's tax increases aimed at the wealthy, he said, had added \$10,000 to his own tax bill.

Dole's 35-year voting record, however, seems never to have reflected anything like the economic programme he now claims to embrace, according to Tom Stickle, who was the State's campaign chairman four years ago for George Bush. Mr Stickle claims that "the greatest enthusiasm" he has been able to sense in San Diego this week has been over rumours that former housing secretary and neo-liberal darling, Jack Kemp, would be Mr Dole's vice-presidential running mate. "That is more curious to me than, gee, when is Dole going to get here?"

Tom Blair, a long-time Republican and editor of the *Union Tribune*, the San Diego magazine, said: "I don't know of any Republicans who have any sense of confidence in Dole's ultimate victory." The general mood, he said, was more one of quiet resignation.

TIM MCGIRK
New Delhi

Tamil Tigers had long been braced against an attack by the Sri Lankan army on their rebel base at Kilinochchi. And when the army offensive, backed by warplanes, began late last month, the Tamil rebels fought back with deadly effect, knowing that if they lost Kilinochchi town, they would have nowhere left to go but the jungle.

The rebels erected bunkers and dug watery trenches along the rice paddies, and when the Sri Lankan troops rumbled into the northern outskirts of Kilinochchi, the soldiers encountered a hellish barrage of mortars, rockets and machine-gun fire. A military spokesman claimed that nearly 70 soldiers had been killed in the battle for Kilinochchi, which has become bogged down to a deadly crawl as the soldiers dodge the bullets and flying shrapnel exploding in the rice fields and marshes.

The Tamil Tigers have admitted to losing 51 defenders in Kilinochchi, and through their London office the rebels yesterday claimed that more than 30 Tamil civilians were killed in bombing runs and shelling by Sri



Tamil chief Prabhakaran: will fight on the run in the jungle

Lankan forces. The Tamil Tigers called for "international intervention" to stop the Sri Lankan government's "mass slaughter of the Tamil people".

However, the Sri Lankan army is in no mood to halt its assault on Kilinochchi. During the night of 16 July, the Tamil Tigers over-ran an army camp at Mullaitivu, in the north-east, slaughtering more than 1,400 soldiers. Only a dozen men survived; some jumped down a well, others shimmied up coconut trees and clung there in fright until reinforcements arrived five days later. That was

the army's worst disaster in its 13-year war against Tamil separatists. But then, on 24 July, the Tamil Tigers reportedly struck again: two bombs exploded on a Colombo train during rush hour, killing at least 70 commuters and injuring 450 others. After these attacks, the army set out to capture Kilinochchi, not only for strategic reasons but to restore its battered morale.

Meanwhile, international aid workers have expressed concern for thousands of Tamil refugees who may be trapped in the fighting. More than 200,000 Tamil refugees were buddled around Kilinochchi, made homeless by the battles earlier this year on the Jaffna peninsula.

Many refugees have fled into the jungle or run to villages outside the battle zone. But aid workers are worried that the recent offensive has cut off refugees' food and medicine supplies. The Tamil Tigers accuse the government of blocking an aid convoy of about 120 lorries which was trying to reach Tamil refugees inside the rebel-controlled areas.

Even if the Tamil chief, Velupillai Prabhakaran, and his Black Tiger suicide squads, are forced to surrender their jungle

fortress of Kilinochchi, the civil war is far from finished. The well-disciplined and heavily-armed Tigers are a lethal enemy and the government's isolated bases along the eastern coast are easy prey. Yesterday, Tamil Sea Tigers rocketed a Philippine freighter docked north of Trincomalee port.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga, elected on her promise of bringing peace between the minority Tamils and the Sinhalese, now faces a political battle in Colombo, the capital. Several Tamil parties are now threatening to withdraw support unless she resumes talks "without pre-conditions" with the Tigers. But after the Mullaitivu massacre, Mrs Kumaratunga is being urged by her generals not to re-start peace talks with the Tigers - broken off by the rebel chief, Mr Prabhakaran, in April 1995 - until Kilinochchi falls.

Mrs Kumaratunga has slashed back food and agriculture subsidies to pay for the war - and it may be her undoing. Although Colombo and the island's south have been largely isolated from the war, the latest onslaught against the Tamil rebels is crippling the economy.

Peking makes diplomatic language a game of Chinese whispers

TERESA POOLE
Peking

Until the Sino-American Treaty of Wanghia in 1844, China's rulers stipulated that foreigners in the Middle Kingdom were not allowed to learn Chinese, such was the Imperial court's contempt for and fear of the foreign devils. Now, China is taking the opposite tack: key government

briefings for foreign journalists will, from next month, take place without the customary English translation, in a move which the *People's Daily* yesterday said "demonstrates that a China full of confidence is walking toward the world with bigger strides".

Explaining the policy, officials hitheily point out that the US State Department conducts its briefings only in Eng-

lish - without Chinese interpretation. Now China will do the same.

The proposed change is symptomatic of China's demands for global "respect", now that its "international status is elevated day by day", said the *People's Daily*.

China's preoccupation with its rising status in the world is trumpeted daily in the official media, whether the reports are

about visiting foreign dignitaries, Olympic Gold medals, or Hong Kong's return to Chinese sovereignty next year.

"The influence a country's spoken and written language has on the international community," the *People's Daily* maintained, "has a lot to do with the prosperity of the country. Only when a country is respected will its written and spoken language be respected."

Unfortunately, the Chinese government seems to be unaware of the possible pitfalls of its new linguistic rectitude. The statement said that the new policy "would enable the world to understand China better".

Or then again, maybe not. Mandarin Chinese is notoriously difficult, and few foreigners feel confident about reliably translating the subtly worded replies served up at Foreign

Ministry briefings. In the past, a ministry translator has provided an "official" translation to be used by everyone, which is corrected on the spot by the spokesman if it is found to be in error.

From now on, each media organisation will have to come up with its own version, in which the diplo-speak may well be mistranslated. A hundred different versions of what China

has said about Sino-US relations, Taiwan, Hong Kong or nuclear testing will appear around the world.

The Chinese government forbids foreign media organisations to hire translators except through the state-run Diplomatic Service Bureau, but the language skills of the staff on offer are often inadequate.

Peking says that it wants international recognition of the

"unprecedented charm and dignity" of the Chinese language.

Certainly, the ministry's current use of Chinese is imaginative, if not necessarily charming. A frequently used phrase about the "five principles of peaceful co-existence", for example, might be more accurately translated as: "Why other countries must not raise China's record on human rights".

سكزا من الاربعين

The malady that keeps Moscow off colour

Rarely can a president have been inaugurated in such humiliating circumstances. Boris Yeltsin, the only freely elected leader in Russian history, looked tired, ill and barely capable of governing the world's largest country when he took the oath of office in yesterday's Kremlin ceremony. What should have been a celebration of Russia's young democracy turned into yet another illustration of the fundamental instability of a country where so much power is concentrated in the hands of one sick man. Far from delivering a memorable Lincoln- or Kennedy-style inaugural address, Mr Yeltsin recited the brief oath, spent a mere 16 minutes on stage, and then hastily departed a ceremony that had been brought indoors and shortened for medical reasons.

To make matters worse, as he solemnly swore to "protect human rights and freedoms" and "earnestly serve the people", thousands of Russian soldiers were under siege from separatist rebels in Grozny, the Chechen capital. Timing their offensive to cause maximum embarrassment to Mr Yeltsin, they conclusively demonstrated this week that, if Russia's armed forces are among the biggest and most powerful in the world, they are also among the most demoralised and incompetent.

Taken together, the intensification of the Chechen war and Mr Yeltsin's poor health mean that he has begun his second term with-

out the optimistic atmosphere and sense of a fresh start that should have accompanied his re-election. Just one month after his victory over Gennady Zyuganov, the Communist challenger, urgent political and economic problems are piling up and Mr Yeltsin has yet to come good on any of his principal campaign promises. Illness accounts for much of the uncertain start, but Mr Yeltsin and his advisers need to grasp that the Chechen war is absorbing too much of the time and energy that should be devoted to political and economic reform.

The war which Pavel Grachev, Mr Yeltsin's former defence minister, once boasted would be over in a couple of hours has already lasted 20 months and, according to the US State Department, cost 35,000 civilian lives. The Russian forces have clearly failed in their objective of drumming the rebels out of Grozny and other major towns and confining them to the mountainous south of Chechnya. Indeed, the Chechens made a better job of seizing parts of the capital this week than did the Russians when they first tried to capture Grozny in December 1994. In such a conflict, which pits highly motivated, well-armed guerrillas against poorly paid soldiers and reluctant conscripts, the initiative will always lie with the guerrillas, who can infiltrate towns, strike at will and filter away.

If any event proved that this is an unwinnable war for Russia, it was the latest



Chechen offensive. During a week when it was essential that nothing should spoil Mr Yeltsin's inauguration - the first such grand national occasion since Tsar Nicholas II's coronation in 1896 - Russian forces showed themselves incapable of defending a city against fighters who are officially dismissed as "bandits" and "terrorist gangs". It makes little sense to blame the rebels, as the United States did this week, for launching their offensive. It had been clear for several weeks that the Russian forces had little intention of honouring the truce that Mr Yeltsin accepted in June as a way of taking the Chechen war out of the electoral debate. The basic responsibility for the war lies with the Kremlin, as Mr Yeltsin himself acknowledges in his more reflective moments.

Since there can be no military solution to the conflict, the only way forward is a restoration of the truce, followed by a negotiated settlement. This in turn will free Mr Yeltsin and his government to concentrate on overcoming the challenges facing Russia, particularly on the economic front. The most important problem is the state budget deficit. The government's failure to collect taxes efficiently and keep the deficit under control caused the International Monetary Fund to withhold last month's tranche of the \$10.2bn (£6.6bn) loan agreed earlier this year to underpin Russia's market reforms.

It is vital that the Russian government

should introduce detailed tax reforms and make a determined effort at collecting taxes from cheating companies, for without the IMF funds, the entire reform process could grind to a halt. Yet a successful tax policy, like a successful anti-inflation programme, requires sustained political will, and much of the government's will is being sapped by the prolonged and brutal Chechen war.

Mr Yeltsin has probably not helped matters by reconstructing his administration in a way that seeks to balance various Kremlin interest groups and personalities against each other. He has nominated Viktor Chernomyrdin, a moderate reformer representing the oil and gas industry, to continue as prime minister. But he promoted Alexander Lebed, an erratic retired general, to be his personal security adviser, and then let him pick Russia's new defence minister, Igor Rodionov. Mr Chernomyrdin and Mr Lebed each sees himself as Mr Yeltsin's natural successor, and neither regards the other with warmth. The atmosphere of intrigue and struggle, all the thicker because of Mr Yeltsin's illness, cannot serve the cause of effective government.

Yet the chief obstacle to a successful Yeltsin second term remains the Chechen war. After this week's events, it should be clear to him that Russia's problems can only grow more acute the longer he delays peace negotiations and the search for a political settlement.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

No change to drink-driving limit

Sir: Your front page and leader (8 August) on drinking and driving accused me of seeking "excuses" for not lowering the legal blood alcohol limit. Whatever else, "excuses" are not my style.

Like you, I am concerned that the massive reduction in drink-related fatalities over the last decade now seems to have bottomed out. I agree that every life lost is an avoidable tragedy. You are right that complete abstinence is the only sensible policy and it is the message we constantly conveyed. You are right too, that habits have indeed changed - largely, I would argue, because of the sustained media campaign over the past 10 years that has proved extraordinarily effective.

But it is precisely that overwhelming public support that could be forfeited if government were seen to be going beyond what the public perceives as reasonable. It is not the legal blood alcohol limit that saves lives. As you yourselves point out, many countries in Europe have lower limits and tougher penalties, yet none has a better record on alcohol-related road deaths. It is the acceptance of the underlying message that has changed our habits, not the legal limits or penalties, and it is that which I believe would be at risk if the Association of Chief Police Officers, the British Medical Association or any other no doubt well-intentioned body disturbs the present consensus.

There may be a time when it will be right to introduce a lower limit, but that time is not now.
STEVEN NORRIS MP
(Epping Forest, Con)
House of Commons
London SW1

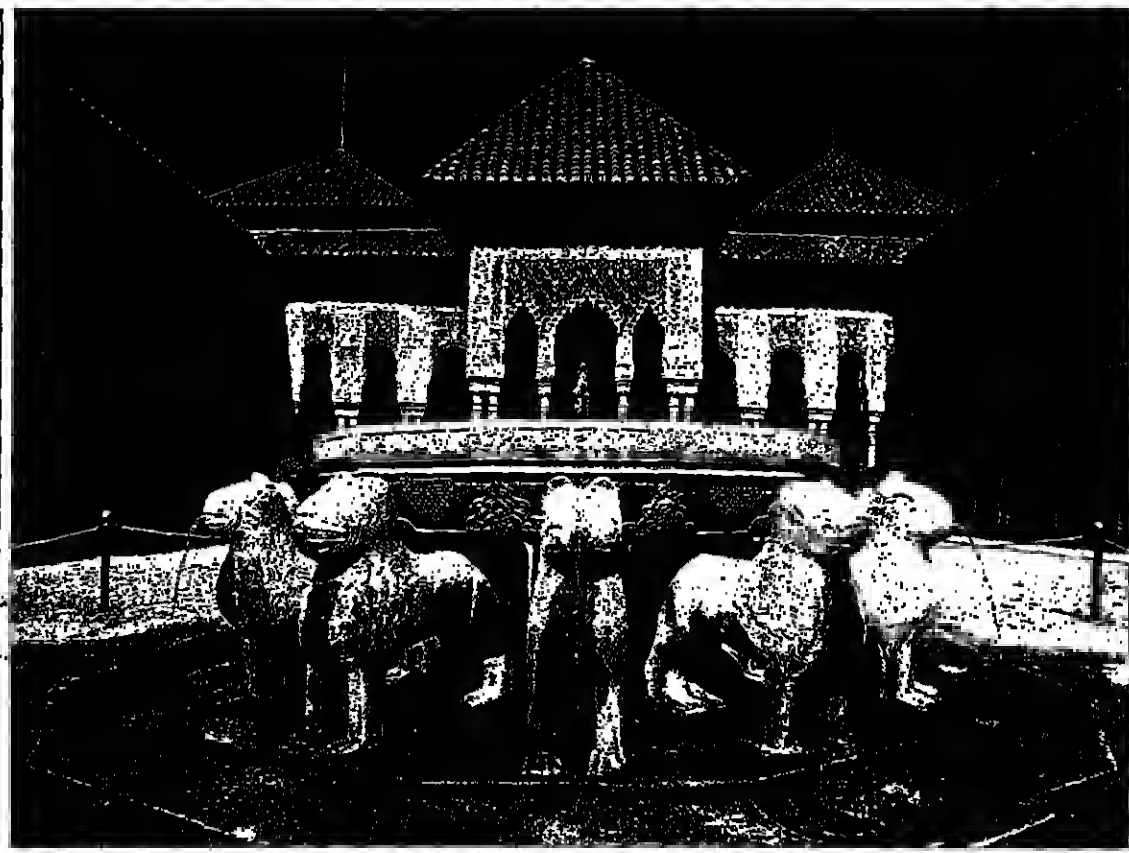
Sir: Your report that police chiefs are about to make a public show of support for lowering the present drink-driving limit heralds a breakthrough for the campaign run by doctors, road safety and health groups for many years.

Lowering the drink-driving limit will save hundreds of lives. With the Association of Chief Police Officers about to add their voice to that of the BMA, the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Alcohol Misuse and Alcohol Concern, surely it cannot be long before the Government sees the sense of changing the law.
MARY-ANN MCKIBBIN
Director
Alcohol Concern
London SE1

Sir: A reduction in the level of alcohol with which we may drive will probably save lives, and is to be welcomed.

However, you fail to put the figures for drink-related deaths into context. You say that in 1993, 540 deaths were attributable to drink-driving. There was a total of 2,969 deaths in motor vehicle accidents in England and Wales in 1993, so it follows that 2,429 of them (82 per cent) involved stone-cold sober drivers.

A motor vehicle is a killing machine with or without alcohol. It is not time that much more publicity and effort was put into reducing the other 82 per cent of the deaths?
J P JOHNSON
Bristol, Avon



The Alhambra, at Granada, Spain: we would be much the poorer without it

Spectrum

Islam's contribution to world civilisation and culture

Sir: Perhaps Robert Fisk ("Burying the Crusader's sword", 1 August) can explain why the 800-year occupation of Spain, the 400-year occupation of Greece and the Balkans, the 200-year occupation of Sicily, and the 100-year occupation of Corsica (longer than the occupation of Iraq by the British) by Arabs or Turks are not seen for the acts of aggression, colonialism and imperialism that they were. Add for good measure, the three-year siege of Malta, the siege of Vienna in 1683, the capture of Taranto, the yearly raiding parties along the French and Italian coasts and it becomes quite difficult to see these events as merely the actions of uninvited and over-boisterous guests whom the police have been unable to control.

Islamic triumphalism and consequently Islamic jihad or "crusade" and aggression are not fantasies but established facts. If the Pope is to apologise for the Crusades, then perhaps an Islamic Council can apologise for Islam's past depredations. It would be useful and salutary to hear in mind, that in its conquering course, Islam destroyed one major Middle Eastern religion, Zoroastrianism, and in the words of one Indian writer, "broke the back of Indian civilisation".

None of this would detract from Islam's contribution to world civilisation and culture. We would be much the poorer without the Alhambra, without Averroes and Avicenna, without algebra, without

Persian and Moghul miniatures, and without the Taj Mahal or the Dome of the Rock.

Once apologies have been made on all sides, we could then see yearly gatherings of European and Islamic and Jewish artists and intellectuals, scholars and scientists to examine our common problematic future seen, alas, in the light of a long history of mutual aggression. Hopefully, they would display more balance than Robert Fisk who, in warning against the demonisation of Islam, almost succeeds in demonising Americans, Israelis and Jews and sundry Europeans who happen not to share his views.
JOHN D NORMAN
London W3

Short's antics are a threat to Labour victory

Sir: I suspect that many more people must be as weary of the antics of Clare Short and her tribe as I am (report, 8 August). With only months to a general election and a chance to free our country of the nonentities currently in office, we are treated to yet another display of unfocused emoting which can only serve Conservative purposes rather than those of Labour.

She might care to reflect that Tony Blair has made her seat and those of Ken Livingstone, Jeremy Corbyn and the other malcontents infinitely safer than otherwise would have been. In the event of a Tory victory she would be able to parade her left-wing conscience from the well-paid safety of the back benches without any burden of responsibility or loyalty. The real victims would be the old, the poor, the unemployed and all who yearn for a more just society. Her complaints about being attacked from behind by those whom she thought were her supporters might better have been expressed by Tony Blair than by herself, but then, he has more sense.
LEONARD PRIDE
Cleckheaton, West Yorkshire

Sir: I am bemused by the likes of Brian Mawhinney (6 August) and now Clare Short who seem to think it a shortcoming in Tony Blair that he seeks power.

They have obviously failed to observe a principle which is demonstrable in every walk of life and at every level of social organisation: power is never given, it is taken, usually by those who are the most determined and ruthless. Despite pious protestations to the contrary, the surest guide to understanding such matters remains in the realism of Machiavelli, for while "everyone will admit that it would be most laudable to find all the good qualities combined in a prince... human nature does not allow it".
FR DOMINIC KIRKHAM
Corpus Christi Priory
Manchester

Whistle-blowing in the workplace

Sir: Paul Valley ("Are you brave enough to blow the whistle?", 2 August) glides over one of the main problems facing senior staff who fall foul of improper employer behaviour - whether it is dishonesty, breach of contract, harassment, health and safety breaches or whatever. He states, of someone who was sacked after blowing the whistle that "although he subsequently won his claim for unfair dismissal, his compensation was statutorily limited to less than half his annual salary."

In 1974, when the Labour government and the Trades Union Congress agreed on the compensation for unfair dismissal, they limited the maximum compensation (which is rarely paid) to less than two-thirds of the average annual salary. It has suited successive governments to protect employers who behave improperly and unfairly, by keeping compensation so low that anyone in even a moderately senior position has virtually no protection under the employment protection legislation. It will be a test of the seriousness of the opposition parties in their "fight" against corruption in business, to see whether they continue to condone this non-protection of just those who would be most effective as whistle-blowers.
DR HUGH MASON
Assistant National Secretary
Association of University and College Lecturers
Southsea, Hampshire

LETTER from THE EDITOR

Everyone knows about the silly season, don't they? It's that time of year when everyone is on holiday, nothing happens, so we fluff up stories that can't quite be described as news, and - well, shall we just say - inflate things a little.

I've always thought the silly season is a bit of a misnomer. It never really arrives, and it's rarely very silly. The year I worked in America, my then bureau chief departed for his month-long holiday in the Adirondacks on 1 August assuring me that nothing, absolutely nothing ever happened that would bring people back to Washington DC in the humid mid-summer heat. I could go swimming, see the kids, pop into the office to make a few calls, but there wouldn't be anything to worry me. The next day Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. I found myself writing half the paper, and my bureau chief paddled back over the lake, climbed in his car and headed back to DC. Somehow something always seems to happen.

And so it's been this week. The Editor goes off on holiday, assuring me that everything's quiet, and the next minute we find ourselves grappling with two of the most fundamental human questions. First we are compelled to ask when society should allow a woman to end half of a twin pregnancy; then we find ourselves pondering what it might mean if we are not, after all, alone in the universe.

So far as seasons go, I'm sure you can make a case for saying that there is something faintly silly about finding a hint of life on Mars - although I am convinced, from our readers' huge fascination for the whole subject of cosmology, that the question twangs a deep chord in our consciousness.

And there is nothing even approximately silly about trying to judge one woman's decision to abort one of her embryonic twins. Inevitably this topic has provoked a deluge of letters, many of which emotively voice the personal experience of twins or mothers who have

struggled with these problems themselves. There is a sense in which newspapers are at their best when they provide a place where real people reflect on their most potent events in their emotional lives - which is what's been happening on this page over the past few days. However, a subject like this also creates certain special discomforts for a newspaper. If the doctor was wrong to expose woman X to a risk of broken confidentiality, were we right to report it so thoroughly, and commentate so vigorously? It is at least ambiguous: the public debate is a great blessing, but it wouldn't have happened if the doctor had not been indiscreet.

What else was silly this week? Clare Short's attack on Tony Blair? Nothing very silly about that. In fact, you can usually tell that a political party is huffing and puffing when its spin doctors try to dismiss a story as mere "silly season" agitation, as they did in this case. Nonsense. Clare Short attacked Tony Blair's New Labour programme policies. She attacked him. And she was articulating the opinions of many Labour activists. This story will run and run - until Mr Blair cuts her dead.

My favourite question of the week, though, is who you would choose as the top five British women of the century. I sort of assumed that men would be less eligible to comment on the matter. I, like many readers, was amazed to discover that the Post Office's selection panel hadn't even considered Barbara Hepworth. But then, it's a bit like playing Your Five Favourite Albums. Five Best Novels - you know, the sort of thing you do in the silly season, when you're on holiday...

Colin Hughes
Deputy Editor

QUOTE UNQUOTE

If teachers cannot improve, heads and governors must not be afraid to dismiss them - Gillian Shephard, Education Secretary

Jumping into a car after a smash-and-grab raid on a jewellers to be told by the driver that the car wouldn't go - "Mad" Frankie Fraser on his most embarrassing moment

I don't want to sound big-headed, but it's because I'm a very good entertainer - Max Bygraves explaining his success

I want to die at a great age, doing a hole-in-one at Lytham, with my wife there to witness it, or she'd never believe me - Gerry Marsden, of the pop group Gerry and the Pacemakers

I've allowed myself half a day to see some koala bears but that's it - Anna Widdowcombe, prisons minister, stressing that her forthcoming two-week trip to Australia will be spent almost exclusively visiting penal institutions

Seagulls have no natural predator - perhaps we will have to become that predator - Hugh Munton, a public health official in Cornwall, after complaints from holidaymakers about birds swooping on them looking for food

He is a vicious, violent tennis player - Clive James, TV personality, on Chris Patten, Governor of Hong Kong, who beat him 6-0, 6-0

Medieval views on abortion are ignorant

Sir: Paul Valley asks in his article "To imagine is to understand" (6 August) why anti-abortionists, categorically regarded as religious absolutists, fail to recognise the views on abortion of medieval scholars such as St Augustine or St Thomas Aquinas.

The answer is simple: knowledge about procreation, conception and when life begins was very limited in the Middle Ages. Bold theories such as those that "ensoulment" took place 40 days after conception disguised the lack of knowledge. It was science that showed the faults in the bold theories advocated by the Church. For example, Aquinas's view, that up to a certain point the child was part of the mother (poor as that theory sounds), was proved wrong by the 17th century, when William Harvey discovered that after only three weeks the child had blood circulation of its own.

Today, we know that the ovum contains the complete genetic programme for an individual. Those

who are still, at the dawn of the 21st century, advocating abortion betray any values conveyed by the Enlightenment, and take the view of the Middle Ages. The difference is that they cannot claim the innocence of the ignorant.
TOBIAS SCHUMACHER
London W14

Sir: If we are really concerned for the welfare of children then we should expect every pregnant woman to ask herself two questions: one is "do I really want this child?" the other is "have I reasonable prospects of giving this child a fair chance in life?"

If the honest answer to either of these questions is in the negative then, in my opinion, the woman has a moral duty to consider abortion. If the notion of children's welfare means anything then no fetus should have live birth imposed upon it in the absence of positive answers to both questions.
ERIC STOCKTON
Sanday, Orkney

Steel and Power Age

Sir: I enjoyed the picture of the crannog in Loch Tay ("Bronze Age high-rise comes home to Loch Tay with a house on stilts", 8 August). I believe that at least one of the six volunteers working on the project, "using traditional building methods", may have made a discovery even greater than the scientists analysing the Martian meteorite.

In late May, I spent three days at a hotel less than 100 yards from the crannog. Every so often the peace was broken by the unmistakable sound of a chainsaw being applied to the "natural materials".

Perhaps the Bronze Age should be renamed the Steel and Power Age.
GARY STATE
Hounslow, Middlesex

Pinewood's Ned Kelly

Sir: Talking of "Ned Kelly" films (letters, 7 August), don't forget the Peter Finch one made at Pinewood in 1957. The nearest we got to Australia was the back lot at Pinewood! As one of Ned's gang I remember the hot days in the saddle as we rode across the built-up sand dunes.

If memory serves me rightly it was called *Robbery Under Arms*. No masterpiece, but a lot of fun and Peter made a dashing Ned. It was directed with great gusto by Jack (A Town Like Alice) Lee.
PETER PORTOUS
Nubourne, West Sussex

the saturday story

Dole faces his last hurrah

Next week the Republican presidential contender will be hailed as a conquering hero in a frenzy of choreography. But behind the smiles, says Rupert Cornwell, his party is being taken over

For one wonderful, all-intoxicating moment – lasting at least as long as it takes a blizzard of red, white and blue balloons to drift to earth from the 27-foot-high ceiling of the ungenerously small San Diego Convention Center – Bob Dole will stand supreme. There on Thursday evening, having been ferried across the city's great bay like a conquering emperor of old, a grizzled 73-year-old Kansan will live the American politician's penultimate dream: acclaimed and adored by a gathering of 1,990 delegates from every state in the land as he accepts the Republican party's nomination for the Presidency.

The leathery, eternally tanned Dole face will crack into a wolfish grin, and as he savours his triumph, surely even sweeter still at the third time of asking, the taking of the White House itself will seem the merest formality. And who is to grudge him his instant of finely choreographed glory, the goosy show of unity that briefly smooths over the deepest divisions? Between now and election day on 5 November, there may be few others.

The harsh fact is that Bob Dole enters this convention as the most poorly placed Republican candidate in at least 30 years. Not since Barry Goldwater in 1964 has one been further adrift in the polls. In 1976 and 1992, Gerald Ford and George Bush were almost as far behind at a comparable stage, but they at least had the advantage of incumbency. The past month has been a series of disasters great and small. One moment he seemed to doubt that nicotine was addictive, the next he was gratuitously snubbing the NAACP, the most prestigious black civil rights group. This past week has seen further discomfort: a cave-in on abortion to right-wingers that flatly contradicted earlier commitments, and the embracing of a radical tax-cutting, deficit-boasting economic plan that runs contrary to both his record over 35 years in Congress and every instinct in his body.

Such is the price to pay, however, when your deficit in the polls is 20 per cent, your opponent is stealing your every decent idea, and bribery of the voter seems the only recourse. Today Dole announces his vice-presidential running mate. He will be a worthy soul, to be sure

– but not Colin Powell, the one man who could have transformed Republican prospects at a stroke.

And so we are left with the convention. These days, it is said, a convention counts for little. The smoke-filled room is a memory from a remote pre-environmentalist era. More than any of its predecessors, the four-day spectacular which begins in San Diego on Monday will be a pageant of rubber-stamping. Organisers describe it as a "uniquely interactive gathering." In fact, long before it happened, the occasion was pre-produced for television, complete with fuzzy videos "introducing" Mr Dole to a nation he has served prominently for three decades. Only the ingenious, though, need fear a stumble on the apparatus and the intrusion of real politics: "There won't be any political issues at this convention," Paul Manafort, the convention manager, assures. But

Bob Dole is the most poorly placed Republican candidate in at least 30 years

if there are no issues, then image becomes all.

The networks and newspapers will do all in their power not to sup too obediently from the Republican spoon. But next week the party will have its main and last chance of a sustained public showcase, free of competition from the Olympics, the Democrats – even from Clinton, politicking in California this week but graciously on holiday in Wyoming the next. Rather than another orgy of Clinton-bashing, however, what Dole needs desperately is harmony and unity.

Beyond argument he is a stunningly inept campaigner: undisciplined, a wretched and platitudinous speaker, quite bereft of the "vision" that Americans expect from their President. Often he can barely conceal his disdain for the conventions and absurdities of life on the stump. But that is not the only reason for his predicament. Equally responsible are the splits within his own party between moderates and conservatives, especially social con-

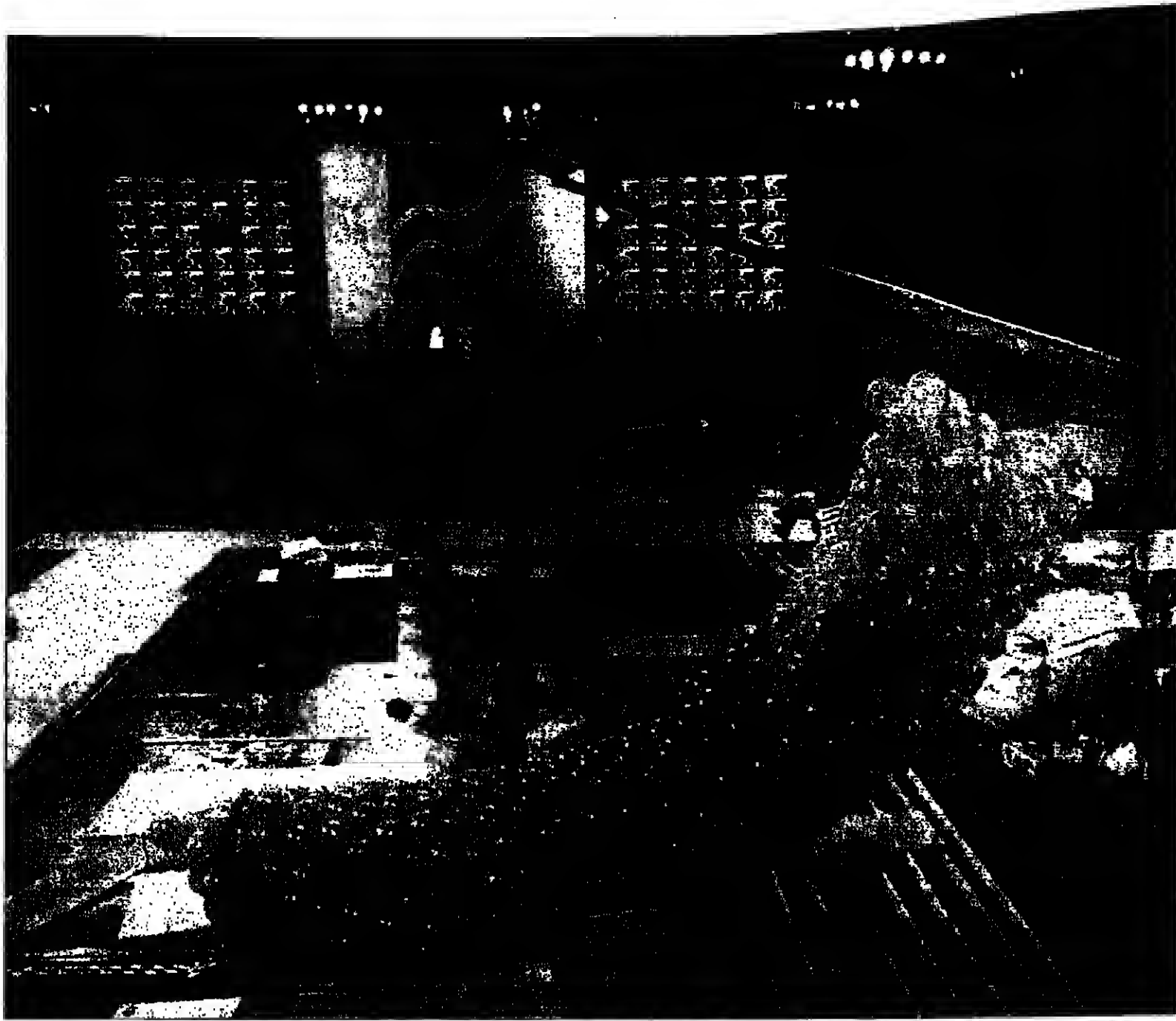
servatives and the religious right, and above all on the issue of abortion. The "Big Tent" has shrunk, the "Open Door" has all but closed. Ronald Reagan, of course, charmed every Republican faction into submission. But his famous "Eleventh Commandment", to "Speak no ill of a fellow Republican," is now honoured in the breach.

With unusual patience, Dole has tacked back and forth this summer to win both social conservatives and pro-life moderates to a compromise on the abortion language in the convention platform. In the end there was a compromise – or more exactly, a capitulation to the religious right, reiterating the demand for a constitutional amendment outlawing abortion, from whose text even the word "tolerance" was literally struck out.

Thus, in cameo, the explanation for the Republican Party's fall from grace since it recaptured control of Congress for the first time in 40 years, just 21 months ago. Thus, too, the prime reason for the wretched state of the Dole candidacy. Since 1992 the fire-breathing Pat Buchanan has roamed the land. The Christian Coalition of the evangelist Pat Robertson (who ran for president in 1988) has been around for even longer, but never has the party seemed as intolerant and exclusive as now, since Newt Gingrich became Speaker of the House of Representatives in January 1995, and the religious right took control of a dozen state parties.

Mr Dole's dilemma, therefore, is that (if Ralph Reed, the angel-faced martinet who is executive director of the Christian Right, is to be believed) 60 per cent of delegates to the convention are social conservatives. Like it or not, he cannot ignore them – not just because they are a majority in San Diego, but because no candidate can afford to alienate his activists. Certainly, shades of difference exist between purists who place moral issues first, and the pragmatists like Reed who know full well that if centrist voters are scared off, Dole cannot win. But for the moment, skilfully nudged by President Clinton, those vital centrists are scared stiff.

What makes his predicament all the more poignant now is that, on paper, Dole is the ideal man to bridge the gap. He



The balloon goes up: the cheers at the convention will be deafening, but they may be the last Bob Dole hears for a long time

Photograph: AP

is a conservative, true, but of an older school, a decent man, sceptical of dogma, tempered by hard times and by common sense. Ideologically, if not by background, he resembles his predecessor as nominee, George Bush. Like the patriarch Bush, Dole has always been suspected by Reaganite true believers and the religious right. As his poll ratings have nosedived, both camps have fantasised about a Dump Dole effort. The question neither has answered, and which illustrates the depth of the Republican divide, is: If not Dole, who?

Under Republican rules, of course, a coup is impossible. But suppose Mr Dole quit voluntarily, or fell under a San Diego bus. Who could take his place? Certainly not Newt Gingrich, architect of the Contract with America, and now the sin-

gle most unpopular politician in America. Nor even a partially mellowing Pat Buchanan, who, having won 3 million votes in the primaries and now the battle of the platform, is muttering about endorsing Mr Dole, assuming a suitably pro-life vice-presidential nominee was found.

But the religious right would never wear a General Powell, or a moderate pro-choice Governor like Christine Whitman of New Jersey, William Weld of Massachusetts, or Pete Wilson of California. Which leaves either some little-known senator, or a retired general from the Bush administration like James Baker. Or, and perhaps most broadly acceptable, the popular former Housing Secretary and passionate supply-sider Jack Kemp – whom Mr Dole has in fact been seriously considering as his running-mate.

But even then the extremism problem will remain. Quite apart from the deal on abortion, whose only merit is to avoid the PR disaster of a public floorfight, the platform is a social conservative wish-list. On issues from immigration to

The platform is a social conservative wish-list. On every issue, the right has prevailed

school choice (abolish the federal Department of Education in its entirety), from gays to foreign policy (no US troops under UN command), the right has prevailed. True, convention platforms are traditionally

forgotten by Labor Day, when the campaign begins in earnest, and for a moment next week at least, the quarrelling of the spring and summer will be put aside.

But Bob Dole is caught in a nightmarish trap. He is too weak in the polls to impose unity on his party; yet every day that public disunity persists, that weakness increases. True, victorious American political parties have often seen bizarre bedfellows: none more so than Franklin Roosevelt's Democrat coalition of blacks, blue-collar whites and the segregationist yet viscerally anti-Republican South. But an iron-clad rule obtains. Break those coalitions apart, and the party loses. Lyndon Johnson's civil rights programme cost the Democrats the Old South, and Republicans won five of the next six Presidential elections.

In 1964, Barry Goldwater seemed to do the same for Republicans when he humiliated the "Rockefeller Republicans" and the party's old Eastern establishment at the convention, only to be branded an extremist and subsequently routed in the general election against Johnson. But Goldwater's was a defeat with a difference. From his political ashes arose the new Republican party: Southern-slanted and suburban, ideologically conservative. That battle is being replayed today. Dole, Kansan by birth but East Coast Washington politico to his fingertips, is representative of a vanishing breed. This time, the social conservatives and religious right may drag him down to crushing defeat. But if history is any guide, for better or worse the Republican future is theirs.

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Jo Brand's week

Oasis's performance at Knebworth this weekend promises to be a nightmare for the police, who have to get huge crowds in and out over two days with the minimum of trouble. So it is heart-warming to know that the poor old police have been issued with a video to give the officers some idea of the fans they are up against. Oasis fans are described as "feisty, contrary and belligerent", thus setting the scene, one would have thought, for the odd dust-up between the boys in blue and the gig-goers. In my experience, when the police get together in a group, they can be pretty feisty, contrary and belligerent too, although police entertainment tends to feature a couple of strippers and a racist Mancunian comic, rather than a talented Mancunian band. Let's hope the good sense of the band prevents any potential rumbles getting out of hand. Oh dear, I forgot... they're feisty, contrary and belligerent too. No doubt after this weekend, the rozzers will be begging for a few Cliff shows.

Oasis fans: 'feisty', say the boys in blue

A recent charity golf tournament in Fairfax county, Virginia, included topless female caddies and an auction of women to accompany male golfers in their carts. Funny, but I've always thought that the women's movement was particularly strong in America. Perhaps the Fairfax county branch is a bit depleted at the moment. Let's hope this doesn't catch on in professional golf or they'll never get round the course. The American Heart Foundation, for whom the tournament was organised, has said it will return the donation. I don't suppose they realised that quite so many women were going to strip down as near to their hearts as possible. As for the auction side of things, when are these sad women going to realise that to be selected by some menopausal tartan-clad sack of spuds is not a valid assessment of your worth as a person?

I was in Cork last weekend to do a couple of shows and for a change the

tour manager, myself and another actor well before the "Countdown" hour and decided on a visit to Blarney Castle, container of the famous stone. Apparently, the original gift bestowed by the Blarney stone was the ability to tell lies for seven years, something those of us who are crap at it would find far more useful than the gift of the gab. I had always assumed that kissing this thing involved no more than a three-minute stagger off the coach, a slight bend of the waist, maybe, and mission accomplished. To someone like me with the fitness record of a sloth it seemed more like mission impossible. First of all you have to get up to the top of Blarney Castle (no lift), via numerous treacherously narrow winding stairs, so designed that invaders could be dispatched with the most minuscule of shoves. Then you have to pick your way round a narrow lumpy floor full of holes revealing a sizeable drop, and finally lie on your back holding on to two metal bars while an attendant-



type holds your feet and pisses himself laughing, as you are dispatched towards the saliva-splattered object. Kiss the Blarney stone? Pogue mahone. (Translation available in Gaelic dictionary.)

Being a bit of an international traveller, this week found me in Shropshire as well, witnessing one of the strangest phenomena I have ever seen. During a heavy thunderstorm, smoke started to billow from a group of trees some 200 yards from where I was staying. We ran to investigate. I use the term "ran" loosely. In fact, in this context, it means "went in the car". The source of the smoke was an enormous tree which had been struck by lightning. It was burning fiercely, and threatened to bring the whole tree down. For once a camera was to hand, although we could not persuade a neighbour down the road to come and have a look as she maintained she had been hit twice by lightning and didn't fancy third time unlucky. I wonder if seeing something like this has some ominous portent? If I'm not here next week, you'll know why.

Cyclists decided to get militant this week and stop the traffic in London on the day of the Tube strike. They are from a group called Reclaim The Streets and are protesting about congestion in London. As a driver, I have to say that cyclists aren't always the conscientious road users they

often claim to be, despite the fact that they do not spew fumes at the rate the rest of us in cars do. As an ex-cyclist myself (incredible as it may seem), I am well aware of the dangers that cyclists face and they don't make it any easier by winding up car drivers in several ways. First, I very rarely see a cyclist obeying traffic lights. They seem to think they have the right to take a short cut across the pavement or just carry on. Second, a sizeable majority don't have lights at night. Then, whenever you go within a few feet of them on the road, so you don't have a crash with another car, they scream sanctimoniously as though they own the road. As for hand signals... non-existent. They have also turned grubby parts of London into what appears to be a suburb of California, with a selection of hideous lycra and face apparatus. Not much of an objective criticism that last one, but I never was much of a scientist.

I had always imagined that the world of the druid lay somewhere beyond the sort of petty earthly squabbles that tie the rest of us down. But no, it seems they're just like us. A row has broken out among Welsh druids because some of them have been sending letters with the stamps on upside down and this is considered a mark of disrespect to her Maj. So far, four people have been banned from ceremonies at next week's Eisteddfod and are planning to protest by turning up in mufti and not in their usual robes. Given the current postal strike, it may be that sticking the stamp upside down might get the letter there more efficiently. Besides, I'm sure the Queen has far more to worry about than her perm being ruined.

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obituaries / gazette

Air Commodore Sir Frank Whittle

A lecture by Frank Whittle was a refreshing cocktail of technical brilliance, laced with bubbly humour and occasionally spiked with a quip or joke to avoid any sign of pomposity. For his listeners, aware that they were in the company of an eminent Englishman and one of the greatest engineers of all time, it was an unforgettable experience.

In today's fast-moving world most of us take the jet engine for granted, as it powers us to almost every corner of the globe. It is easy to forget that by inventing and giving birth to the turbojet, Whittle changed the lives of countless millions of people throughout the world. Few of us know that it was Whittle's engine that introduced America to the jet age, or that (after losing seven years failing to gain any support) he still gave Britain a two- to three-year lead in jet technology immediately after the Second World War. However, many across the globe still identify him as the jet pioneer, and his name is indelibly printed in the annals of aviation history and technology. The former prime minister Margaret Thatcher wrote: "His life and work are an object lesson on the creativity and inspiration of British engineering at its best. He has always retained the great gift of original thought and exposition."

Frank Whittle had to struggle to realise his objectives. He was one of a minority of great inventors to be reared in a working-class background, haunted by the shadow of poverty, as he said, "a street urchin on six days a week and carefully dressed little boy on Sunday". An early fascination for aeroplanes and interest in the sciences, including science fiction, made him determined to become an RAF pilot. From the age of 10 he learnt to use machine tools, and the implements of the draughtsman's trade in his father's workshop. He then won a scholarship to Leamington College, which led to his joining the RAF as a boy apprentice at the age of 16.

After three years of hard discipline and first-class training as a fitter, 364365 Apprentice Whittle, F, was one of five boy entrants out of 600 to win a cadetship, and his dream of becoming a pilot was within his grasp. The two years 1926 to 1928 were formative. Whittle was physically small, disliked team games, pursued the cult of the individual, he was hardly the sort of chap who would appeal to the more flamboyant and team-spirited ex-public-school fraternity. Although apprenticeship training had given him certain advantages, particularly in the workshops, the social gap was wide.

However, the first flower of his genius was to blossom at RAF Cranwell, where he had become more and more

grossed in science and was at his best in physics, mathematics and the theory of flight. At the age of 21, in 1928, he wrote a thesis entitled "Future Developments in Aircraft Design". He envisaged speeds of over 500mph in the stratosphere, at heights where the air density was less than one-quarter of its sea-level value (he had covered the properties of the atmosphere in an earlier thesis). He was awarded full marks by Professor Sinnott, who said, "I couldn't quite follow everything you have written, Whittle. But I can't find anything wrong with it." This thesis was to change the course of his life and sow the seed of a revolution in aviation.

At that time, his ideas were considered by many to be in the realms of fantasy, or science fiction. The maximum speed of front-line fighters then was rather less than 150mph, and they had a service ceiling of only 20,000ft. But this was no dream on Whittle's part. His calculations had proved it possible.

The pursuit of excellence in everything he tackled became Whittle's hallmark. And so it was with his flying. He was assessed as "Exceptional Above Average". For a short phase in his life being a fighter pilot was his forte, and he gave full rein to the "dare-devil" spirit within him. He had become an officer and a gentleman, elated by his pilot's wings, he had fallen in love with Dorothy Lee from an affluent middle-class family.

However, his proposed engine was never far from his thoughts. Nineteen thirty proved a dramatic year for him. On 16 January he filed the Provisional Specification for his turbojet, and on 24 May he married Dorothy Lee in Coventry. On 24 June he participated in the Hendon Air Display, performing his crazy flying routine, and proved finally that he could do better than the vast majority of his public-school contemporaries, both in the air and on the ground.

The RAF to its credit, had realised that Whittle was a budding mathematical genius and, after he had completed the officers' engineering course at Henlow, sent him to Cambridge



The father of the jet age: Whittle in his office in 1948. In the foreground is a model of his Gloster Meteor. Photograph: Hulton Getty

University. There he worked around the clock, primarily engrossed in his engine project, and endeavouring to keep pace with his studies. By 1935, he had gathered three accomplices: W.E.P. Johnson, R. Dudley Williams, and J.C.B. Tilling. These three RAF pilots became partners, and made an invaluable contribution to his project.

By 1936 Whittle's turbojet patent had lapsed, and he had almost given up the idea of ever seeing a turbojet constructed. The breakthrough came when O.T. Falk, a small firm of investment bankers headed by Oswald Falk, a friend and colleague of Maynard Keynes, asked M.L. Bramson to pronounce on the validity of the idea. Falk advanced a small sum, enabling Whittle to form a company and design an actual engine.



Britain's first jet aircraft: the Gloster/Whittle E.28/39, which had its maiden flight in May 1941. Photograph: Imperial War Museum

Thus 1936 was a year of opportunity. Whittle had graduated with First Class honours in the Mechanical Sciences Tripos, and was granted a postgraduate year. During this period of intense activity, Power Jets Ltd was formed and arrangements made to build the WU (Whittle Unit) engine. Whittle's official recognition in high places, Whittle's triumph ended in a battle for survival. Had he received his due official backing when he had been granted his patent in 1931, the RAF might well have been equipped with jet fighters before the Battle of Britain.

Aero-engine manufacturers had enormous vested interests in piston-engine power to protect. They did not want to scrap everything that they had worked for, or to start learning a new technology. They saw the turbojet as a potential rival to their cherished engines, and followed the prevailing belief that gas turbines did not work. It was not until 1939 that Whittle received Air Ministry production contracts for the W.1 flight engine, and the Gloster/Whittle E.28/39 aircraft - Britain's first jet.

The E.28/39 made its maiden flight on 15 May 1941, by which time all major aircraft companies were anxious to become involved and so were the United States, via General "Hap" Arnold. Within six months Whittle engines were being made in the US, and soon America had more jet aircraft

than existed in Britain. At home, plans had been formulated for the production of the Meteor, Britain's first jet fighter. This had been Whittle's goal.

Leslie Cheshire of BTH, who worked with him, said, "The thing that I most remember about Frank Whittle was his total absorption in what he was doing - a total concentration which impinged itself on the atmosphere surrounding him. It was very hard for anybody to evaluate him, because he was a many-sided person who had a charming nature. He trusted people, and believed that everybody was motivated by common good."

In May 1942 he was sent to the US to do whatever he could to help the Americans with their own development of his engine. Whittle was impressed by the vitality and breadth of vision incorporated in the American system, once his project had been accepted. It made him feel good, and it showed more than ever what might have been achieved if he himself had had such backing when he ran his first turbojet in April 1937.

But his visit proved invaluable in other respects. He proved to the Americans, at the highest level, that Britain was in the forefront of aviation technology. The timing was perfect because the war was going badly on all fronts, and Britain needed prestige in America. Lease agreements were being negotiated and the Atlantic was fast becoming a highway for

the interchange of British and US Army Air Forces personnel. Apart from introducing America to the jet age, Whittle's visit proved of major significance in uplifting British technology, and promoting understanding between the two countries.

But years of tension and strain had taken their toll, and Whittle was suffering bouts of illness which were to recur over a long period. In spite of this he relentlessly carried on his work, determined to give the RAF a jet fighter. It was he who had created and given birth to the turbojet, and he was well aware that he was the key figure in its development as a weapon of war. This required not only his genius, but his driving force and singleness of purpose, which set him apart from lesser mortals, and enabled him to overcome political and bureaucratic frustrations.

That the Ministry of Aircraft Production did not take the pressure off him and give him full support to allow him to get on with the job is well documented and part of history. By the time his technological victory was complete, control of development passed into other hands. When Rolls-Royce came on the scene in 1943, Whittle's vital invention at last took off in Britain. The late Sir Stanley Hooker (formerly of Rolls-Royce who took over engine development) said of him:

"Whittle had an unrivalled grasp of the fundamentals of thermodynamics and aerodynamics, and he never did anything, small or big, without the deepest and most logical consideration. As I came to understand his work, I realised that he had laid down the performance of jet engines with the precision of Newton, a feat whose magnitude he never appeared to appreciate."

For the preceding 30 years the performance of piston engines in flight was known only to a very rough approximation based on inaccurate empirical formulae, yet Whittle predicted what a jet engine would do before he had ever made one. His formulae are still used unchanged. They are of such precision that it is more accurate to calculate the performance of jet engines, including the most modern fan engines, than it is to attempt to measure it either in flight or in the astronomically costly test plants, which attempt to simulate flight conditions on the ground. And this is true from take-off to the speed of Concorde, and beyond.

Invalided out of the RAF as an Air Commodore in 1948, Whittle received an award of £100,000, on the recommendation of the Royal Commission. A few days later he was created KBE in the Birthday Honours List, and invested with his knighthood by King George VI in July 1948. He said: "As the King touched me on each shoulder with the sword, I became the first Old Cranwellian to receive the honour of knighthood. The satisfaction which this gave me was overshadowed by my regret that I was leaving the Service in which I had served since the age of 16,

and which had given me the training which made possible the jet engine."

The saddest time for him was to see the break-up of his pioneer team. "One consequence," he said, "was the cancellation of important projects, notably the L.R.1 which should have been the world's first turbofan, was half complete when stopped. And then the power plant for the M.52 (the Miles supersonic aircraft) went down the drain - also nearing completion."

But Whittle never gave up. In the 1950s he planned Conquest liner operations for BOAC, in the 1960s he developed the radical Turbofan for driving through the earth's crust as Technical Advisor to Bristol Siddeley Engines (later Rolls-Royce). Emigrating to the US in 1976 he married his second wife, Hazel Hall, and became a Research Professor at the US Naval Academy, Annapolis, in Maryland. Throughout, he travelled across the globe in his quest after leading aviation companies for advice and consultation, applying his mathematical genius to pure developments in supersonic aviation.

The RAF had been Whittle's mentor since he became a young boy apprentice. It was a product of the Service retaining the style and honour characterising an RAF officer. That as a young engineer of a fiercer he revolutionised a traditional industry is a measure of his genius. The fantastical development in civil and military aviation during post-war years stands still higher the magnitude of his continuing contribution to technological progress.

When Power Jets was nationalised, becoming the National Gas Turbine Establishment, Whittle surrendered all his shares and rights, stating: "My belief is that a serving officer should not be in a position to benefit from his employment in any commercial sense." Thus, his financial recompense for inventing the jet engine rested with those responsible for making awards. Therein is not only his total sense of duty to the Service he loved, but his resolution, and high moral character.

John Goley

Frank Whittle, air force officer and engineer: born Coventry 1 June 1907; RAF Special Air List, attached to Power Jets Ltd 1937-46; CBE 1944, KBE 1948; Technical Advisor to Conquest of Supplies (Air), Ministry of Supply 1946-48; CB 1947; RS 1947; Honorary Technical Adviser, Jet Aircraft, BOAC 1948-42; consultant, Bristol Siddeley Engines/Rolls-Royce 1967-70; RDI 1985; OM 1986; married 1930 Dorothy Lee (two sons; marriage dissolved 1976); 76 Hazel Hall; died Columbia, Maryland 9 August 1996.

The Rev Lawrence Jenco

Father Lawrence Jenco endured over 18 months of captivity at the hands of radical Shia Muslims in Lebanon from 8 January 1985 until 26 July 1986. He was captured on his way to the doctor, just a few months after arriving in Beirut to take up his new position there as Director of Catholic Relief Services.

Jenco's ministry as a Catholic priest was driven by his love of the poor and his sense of social care for others. That is what led him to Beirut, then in a state of war, to minister to the worst afflicted - many of whom were themselves Shias.

He had been ordained a member of the Service order in 1959, after studying for the

priesthood at Mount Carmel College in Canada, the St Joseph Seminary in St Charles, Illinois and in Rome.

For the next 25 years he worked with the poor and the mentally and physically handicapped, and from 1981 travelled abroad in the employ of the Catholic Relief Services, first in North Yemen (for two years), then in Thailand (1983-84), and for a year in India before taking up his post in Beirut.

Foreigners were particularly at risk of kidnapping by Muslim factions in Beirut in the mid-1980s (Jenco was the 10th of some 71). Nonetheless Jenco believed that he was not the person the Shias wanted to take hostage, rather that he

was mistaken for someone else. Mistake or not, he was held against his will for more than a year and a half, the first six months in solitary confinement, naked and chained to the wall of a tiny cell in southern Beirut.

After his he began to be moved from hideout to hideout, in a number of gruelling journeys. It was at this stage that he was placed in the same room with the Associated Press correspondent, Terry Anderson, the longest-held of all the American hostages, who had been taken captive two months after Jenco.

Though baptised a Roman Catholic as a child, Anderson had little use for religion as an adult. He attributes his adult

conversion to the Catholic faith to his fellow hostage, Lawrence Jenco. Anderson dedicated a piece of his poetry in his book *Den of Lions* (1993) to Jenco. Upon learning of his death, Anderson said of him: "He added more to my life than any other man."

At various times Jenco also shared a cell with two other American hostages, David Jacobson, a hospital administrator, and Thomas Sutherland, a university dean.

It was his great faith in God, rooted in the Christian scriptures, that allowed Jenco to develop a practical spiritual strategy almost unheard of in this modern world. This was demonstrated by a story he

told about an encounter which, though he did not know it at the time, turned out to be on the day before his release from captivity.

His young Shia guard entered his room. Jenco pulled down the blindfold over his eyes. Until then he had always been addressed as "Jenco" by his guards. That day his guard said, "Dear father, can you ever forgive me?" In reply Jenco said, "Sayid, do you remember those early days [of captivity]?" (He described them as very violent and fearful days.) "Yes, I do," replied the guard.

"I hated you," continued Jenco, "I must ask you for forgiveness." Chained and blindfolded, the American hostage seeking forgiveness for hating

his guard is not a common occurrence.

After eating his last hostage meal, he read from the Scriptures and wrote this prayer: "God, give me a new heart and a new spirit. You have asked me to love unconditionally. May I forgive as you have asked me to forgive, unconditionally. Then you will be my God and I will be your son." He called the book he wrote about his captivity *Bound to Forgive - the pilgrimage to reconciliation of a Beirut hostage* (1995). Unlike many of his former, fellow hostages, Jenco wanted someday to return to Lebanon to visit the Shias who held him captive for 594 days.

After his release, Jenco ac-

cepted the position as Campus Minister at the University of Southern California (in Los Angeles). Immediately before his death he was an Associate Pastor at St. Domitilla Church in a suburb of Chicago, Illinois.

When it was determined this past winter that he had cancer, Lawrence Jenco said: "I always thought that God had a cross for me to carry, and I never thought the cross was being a hostage. Now I think I know what that cross is - to learn how to die." And, as he did with so many experiences throughout his life, he not only was a learner, but a great teacher. For those who knew him during these past seven months, he taught by courageous example how to



Jenco: "bound to forgive"

die in peace and with dignity.

John Cook

Lawrence Martin Jenco, pastor, born Joliet, Illinois 27 November 1934; ordained priest 1959; died Chicago 19 July 1996.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

BIRTHS

SILLS: On 24 July to Carole (nee Lowe) and Richard, twin girls, Saskia Frances and Imogen Elizabeth. Sisters for Sam.

STODOLSKA: On 7 August, to Caroline (nee Budge) and Nicholas, a son, Samuel Putnam.

WHISEN: To Julia Thorogood and Francis Whisen, on 2 August 1996, at home, in rural style, Archie Francis Riversdale, a brother for Jack, Frank, George, Anna and Bertie. With thanks to all our near-door neighbours, Giff Davies.

DEATHS

LESLIE: Margery Leslie OBE (nee Betts), formerly Principal of the Richmond Adult College, wife of Professor R.F. Leslie for 54 years, died at the John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford on 8 August 1996. The funeral service will be at St Mary's Church, Charlbury, Oxon, on Tuesday 19 August at 14 noon. Donations to Wine Acres Recreation Ground Charlbury c/o R.F. Leslie, Market House, Church Street, Charlbury OX7 3PP.

Announcements for Births, Marriages & Deaths (births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Notices of Weddings, Anniversaries, In Memoriams) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3DL, published in 971-293 2011 faxed in 9171-293 2010, and are charged at 65.50 a line (NAT extra).

Forthcoming marriages

Mr L.J. Parcell and Miss S. C. Lorraine. The engagement is announced between Sarah Claire Lorraine, daughter of Mrs Robert Ayres, of Stewley, Buckinghamshire, and Ian James Parcell, elder son of Mr and Mrs Terence Parcell, of Loughton, Buckinghamshire.

Birthdays

TODAY: Mr John Alldis, conductor, 67; Dame Gillian Brown, former diplomat, 73; Dame Elizabeth Butler-Sloss, a Lord Justice of Appeal, 63; Sir Lawrence Byford, management consultant, 71; Mrs Lella Campbell, former chairman, ILEA, 85; General Sir George Cooper, former Chief Royal Engineer, 71; Mr Eddie Fisher, singer, 68; Miss Rhonda Fleming, actress, 73; Professor Alexander Goehr, composer, 64; Sir Alan Hardcastle, former head of Government Accounting Service, 63; Professor Adrian Harris, clinical oncologist, 46; Mr Leonard Lickorish, former Director-General, British Travel Association, 78; Mrs Barbara Mills QC, Director of Public Prosecutions, 56; Miss Kate O'Mara, actress, 57; Mr David Rowland, chairman of Lloyd's, 63; Lord Stewart, former government minister, 61; Mr Richard Unsworth, novelist, 61; Mr Richard Wells, Chief Constable, South Yorkshire, 56; Miss Jane Wyatt, actress, 85.

TOMORROW: Sir Bernard Ashley, hon life president, Laura Ashley, 70; Sir Richard Barrett, former Chief Inspector of Constabulary, 68; Mr Don Boyd, film director, 48; Sir Geoffrey Cass, Chairman, Royal Shakespeare Company, 64; Miss Arlene Dahl, actress, 72; Mr Kenneth Eastham MP, 69; Mr James Eaton, Lord-Lieutenant, County Borough of Londonderry, 69; Professor John Flanagan, geneticist, 70; Professor Bob Hepple, Master of Clare College, Cambridge, 62; Professor Alan Hoddinott, composer, 67; Professor Derry Jeffares, English scholar, 76; Sir Aaron Klug, molecular biologist, 70; Dame Jean Lancaster, former director, WRNS, 67; Mr Raymond Lippard, conductor, 69; Miss Anna Massey, actress, 59; Admiral Sir Julian Oswald, former First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff, 63; Miss Jean Parker, actress, 84; Sir Michael Quintan, director, Ditchley Foundation, 66; Dame Angela Rumbold MP, joint deputy chairman of the Conservative Party, 64; Mr Thomas Taffie, racehorse trainer, 63; The Right Rev James Thompson, Bishop of Bath and Wells, 60; Lord Varley, former government minister, 64.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Queen and Prince Charles.

Changing of the Guard. TODAY: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment (The Queen's Life Guard) will be changed by the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment (The Queen's Life Guard) at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am. The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment (The Queen's Life Guard) will be changed by the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment (The Queen's Life Guard) at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am. The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment (The Queen's Life Guard) will be changed by the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment (The Queen's Life Guard) at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am.

Mystery, strangeness and life on Mars

faith & reason

Andrew Brown questions what the discovery of a Martian meteorite will teach us about the nature of the universe. Does it increase the credibility of Christianity?

Is an unmade, unfeeling universe odder or less credible than one which was made to pivot around an act of redemptive agony? There cannot be a good measure of improbability for what is, by definition, the only universe we've got. We can talk about how different the universe of observation turns out to be from the universe of common sense; but it is very difficult to argue that one or the other is more natural or more probable. This is a razor that cuts both ways. Christians who accept the scandal of particularity have no business arguing from the anthropic principle that a universe with life in it is so unlikely as to demand a maker.

On balance, I think the Martian meteorite will diminish, perhaps unreasonably, the credibility of Christianity. This is not because the central Christian doctrines cannot be easily adopted to make room for it: they can. But there are questions of identity involved. The Christian universe in which other planets are seeded with life - some of it presumably intelligent and in need of redemption - is very different from the universe of most of Christian history. It may not be different in its essentials, but it is different in its emotional colouring.

The strain will come because many - perhaps most - of the Christians in

the world are still living in the 19th century. So what would a nice historical judgement - which a Christianity fully assimilated to a modern world is really the same religion as was practised by the builders of great cathedrals - becomes a nasty philosophical dispute. The ancient and modern forms of Christianity have to co-exist; but both tend to be weakened by their struggle. Fundamentalism has not hated the world half as much as it has hated liberal Christianity; and this feeling

For at least the last 50 years, fundamentalism has seemed to be gaining strength, and liberal religion dying. But if there is a purely a matter of sociology. But if there is a doctrinal reason for the popularity of conservative religion then it is surely that it has presented a sense of mystery and strangeness better than liberal mainstream Christianity has. It's easy and almost always right to mock demands for "explanation" or "relevance" from evangelists. But their instinct for excitement is surely right. The promise of vibrant religion, just as of real science, is that common sense is wrong about almost everything that matters - and that the earth may turn out to contain frozen threads of evidence for life on Mars.

Foreign Exchange Rates

[illegible]

British Gas clashes with Ofgas over competition

CHRIS GODSMARK
Business Correspondent

Another row is brewing between British Gas and the industry regulator, this time over moves to bring forward the introduction of the next stage of domestic competition, due to start in April 1997.

Ofgas is pushing to speed up the second phase in the development of the residential gas market, which would extend competition to 1.5 million homes across the south of England, to a new date in January.

Ofgas hopes to publish a consultation paper on the proposals at the end of this month, but has already held talks with TransCo, the British Gas pipeline business.

The move is believed to be

TransCo's revenues next year by between 20 and 28 per cent, reducing average bills by around £30 a year. British Gas said it would have to cut 10,000 jobs to fund the cuts, which it has described as the "biggest smash and grab raid in history."

The head of Ofgas, Clare Spottiswoode, returns from holiday on Monday to face a meeting with British Gas as the company makes one final attempt to get her to water down the proposals. Publication of the final formula has already been delayed until "mid-August", though one industry source suggested they could be delayed beyond next week.

To prepare for domestic competition, TransCo has developed one of the world's largest computer databases to track customers as they leave British Gas Trading, the gas supply arm of British Gas, for rival suppliers. In the first phase, which began in May with 500,000 customers in Devon and Cornwall, around 12 per cent of households switched from British Gas.

However, several problems occurred, including some ex-British customers having hundreds of pounds accidentally debited from their bank accounts when they moved from the company.

The next stage, to extend competition to the whole of the south apart from Greater London, was originally due to take place next April, with the rest of the country included in April 1998. However, Ofgas said yesterday: "The inclination is now to do something earlier in the year. The most likely new date would be 27 January."

Several independent suppliers have said they are keen to start supplying gas in the region sooner. One company, Total Gas, has already begun marketing in Kent and Bristol.

Meanwhile another argument came to a head yesterday between TransCo and independent gas suppliers over the rules governing the way different firms use the pipeline infrastructure.

Suppliers must match the amount of gas they put in the system with the amount of gas used by customers. From next month these forecasts must balance daily, rather than monthly, or the firms could face severe financial penalties.

British Gas's rivals have complained that information from metering systems, which comes via TransCo, is not accurate enough to forecast daily demand. Ofgas said it would announce proposals on the issue on Monday. But yesterday one independent supplier said if the problems were not sorted out before September, it may have to challenge its contracts with TransCo in court.



Clare Spottiswoode: Back from holiday for a meeting

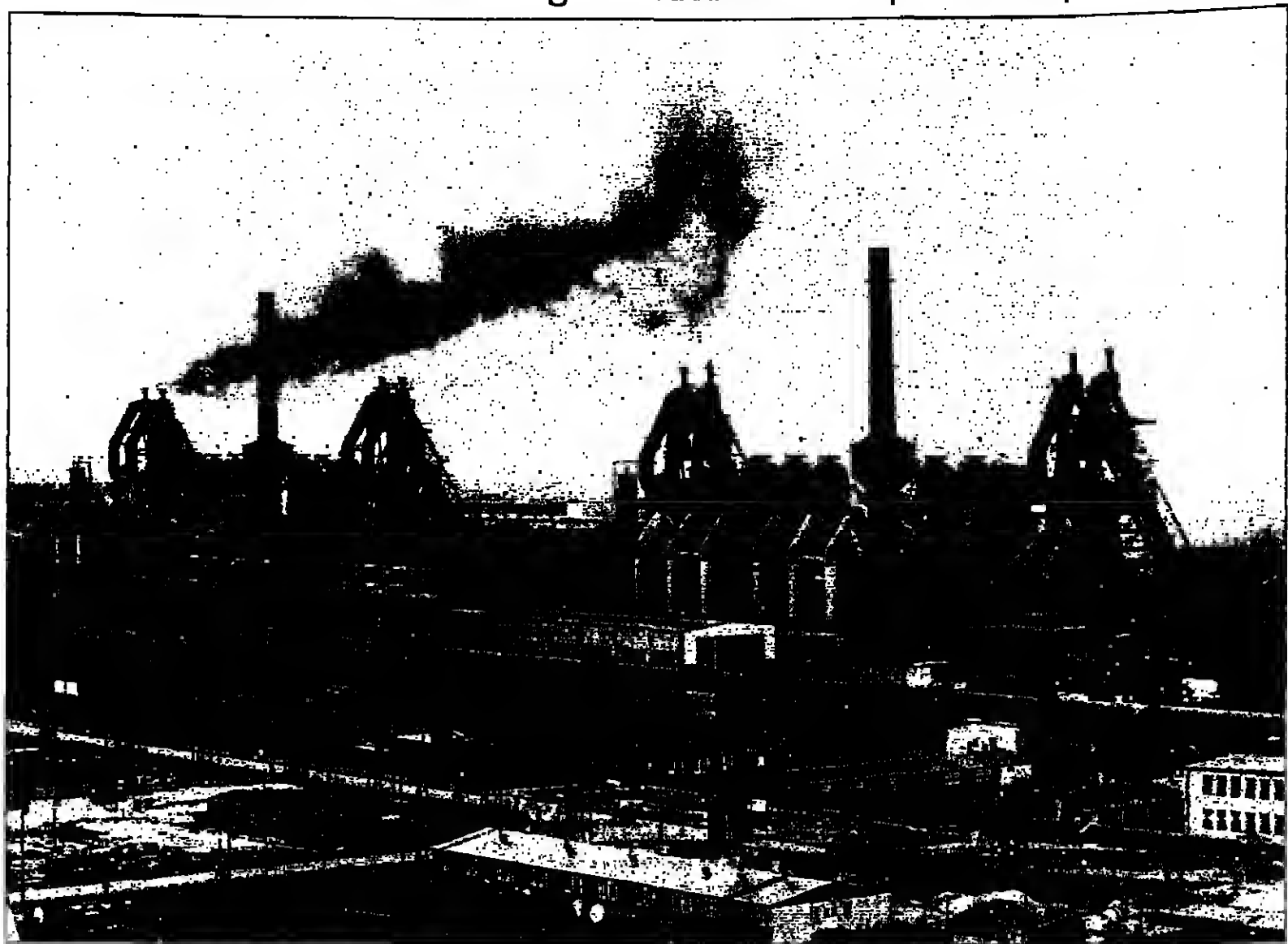
popular with government ministers, who hope to provide crucial voters in the South with cheaper gas bills.

But TransCo wants to spread the process over several months. Instead of an initial "big bang" on 1 April, its preferred option is to introduce competition over a six-month period, taking each postcode area at a time. A spokesman said: "We see the value of some form of phasing over the first half of the year. We are concerned at what might be an over-hasty approach that could put customers off."

The Gas Consumers Council also prefers a step-by-step approach to competition, but such a move would mean many homes would not have the chance of cheaper bills from rival suppliers to British Gas before the general election, which must take place by next May.

The latest dispute comes as British Gas waits for Ofgas to reveal its contentious final price controls for the pipeline business. The company has campaigned vociferously against the proposals, which would cut

German steel scandal: Executives granted £1m bail after police swoop in Düsseldorf



Under a cloud: Thyssen arrests have been linked to the purchase of steel mills in the former East Germany

NIC CICUTTI
and ELIZABETH KLEIN

The chairman of Thyssen, Dieter Vogel, and nine other senior executives at the German steel giant have been arrested in a series of police raids linked to £30m fraud over an east German metals trading company.

Detectives searched the homes of several of the arrested men, including Mr Vogel, together with Thyssen's head office in Düsseldorf, for evidence linked to the alleged fraud. Other offices throughout Germany were sealed by police officers and will be searched later.

By late last night, nine of the arrested men, including Mr Vogel, had been released on bail of up to £1m. Mr Vogel appeared briefly before a court in Düsseldorf, where charges were read out.

Shares in Thyssen fell by more than 2 per cent to DM262.2 on the Frankfurt exchange on news of the arrests.

10 Thyssen bosses held over £30m metals fraud

They follow an investigation into Metallurgiehandel, an eastern German metals company bought by Thyssen after German reunification in 1990.

Prosecutors allege both that managers at Thyssen took DM37.8m (£15m) from Metallurgiehandel when it was sold and that a further DM32.2m of damages was caused by manipulating the company's accounts.

Among the other arrests are former Thyssen chairman Heinrich Kersten, and directors Josef von Riedere and Hans Ulrich Gruber.

Berlin prosecutors have been investigating whether Thyssen defrauded the Treuhand privatisation agency in charge of privatising eastern German enterprises.

A separate investigation was launched in 1993 and shelved after Thyssen paid compensation worth £5m to Treuhand.

Analysts yesterday said the arrests were a fall-out from the kind of free-wheeling deal typical in the heady days just after German reunification in 1990.

The case is similar to that of Bremer Vulkan, the highest German shipbuilder. Bremer Vulkan sank after allegedly covering losses at its Western operations by siphoning off public subsidies earmarked to refurbish its eastern German wharves.

The giant steel-maker said in a statement: "The action of the state prosecutor is incomprehensible. There have been no new facts or evidence since the case was suspended in October 1993."

The company said the arrests had allegedly been made to ensure the managers concerned could not flee the country. "But the fact that most of those concerned interrupted their holidays to make themselves available for questioning means that the fears are absurd," Thyssen added that it would fight the charges with all legal means at its disposal.

The company was indirectly backed by Treuhand, which it al-

legedly defrauded. A spokesman said: "The case is effectively closed for us."

In 1990, as the Treuhand strove to maintain jobs while selling off state-run enterprises in the formerly communist east, it acted hastily to strike deals with buyers in the interest of protecting jobs.

Treuhand contacted Thyssen in December 1990 to break up Metallurgiehandel, the eastern German state monopoly that controlled foreign trade of metal products.

Like shipbuilder Bremer Vulkan, but on a much smaller scale, Thyssen may have gone too far in trying to squeeze the best deal out of its acquisition of Metallurgiehandel.

"Everybody was trying to shelter themselves from losses," said Olaf Toelke, an analyst at Merrill Lynch.

"They paid little for companies, sometimes only a token price of one mark, but they guaranteed employment."

Somerfield shares show early sparkle

NIGEL COPE

Shares in Somerfield, the supermarket group, rose to a 14p premium on their first day of dealings yesterday though some of the company's original debt holders expressed displeasure over the handling of the flotation.

The shares, which were priced at 145p, shot to 162p in heavy early trading before settling down to close at 159p. There were trades as high as 165p, a

full 20p above the issue price. "It's about where we thought it would be but I still think it will go to around 180p in the medium term," one analyst said.

Some of the debt holders in the original Isosceles parent company said they were unimpressed with the flotation which saw two price cuts and a last-ditch attempt by the advisers Kleinwort Benson to sell Somerfield, Britain's fifth biggest food retailer, to rival supermarket groups last week.

"We're not very happy and I think it was mishandled," one of the former debt holders said. "But having said that, the senior debt holders signed an agreement earlier this year agreeing to a minimum they would accept from the flotation. The proceeds cover that minimum."

Another debt holder said it was "displeased" with the flotation, but said it would not be filing any litigation against Kleinwort Benson, the German-owned investment

bank, for selling the business too cheaply.

Another Isosceles debt holder said that any litigation might come from US investors such as the holders of junior debt and deep discount bonds who did not receive full repayment. However, the debt holder thought lawsuits were unlikely. "They all played the game and most of them have made some money trading the debt along the way."

Somerfield's chief executive, David Simons, was more positive: "I'm absolutely delighted that Somerfield is an independent company and we can get on with expanding the business."

He refused to comment on Kleinwort Benson's handling of the issue, which was the largest non-privatisation flotation of the year.

Somerfield blamed weak stock market conditions and a profits warning from Iceland, its rival food retailer, for cutting the offer price twice in the run-up to the flotation.

Names claim support of US action group

JOHN WILLCOCK

A Lloyd's of London investor action group, which has launched a last-ditch legal challenge to the insurance market's recovery plan, yesterday claimed to have won the support of a US action group.

The Paying Names Action Group (PNAG) said that the American Names' Association (ANA) has advised its members to support PNAG in applying for a judicial review of Lloyd's reconstruction and renewal plan.

PNAG has said it has about 3,000 members, but industry sources reckon this may be an overstatement since official documents issued ahead of the review indicated it had under 1,300 members.

The ANA claims to represent around 500 of the 3,000 names. This group has opposed the recovery plan for some time.

"I am very pleased to have support in our efforts to redress the balance of fairness in Lloyd's current R&R offer," said the PNAG chairman, Tony

Welford, who has led this latest legal challenge.

The case is due to be heard in the High Court on Monday and comes as the 33,500 Names at Lloyd's decide whether to support the plan and pay final bills to reinsure billions of pounds of liabilities into a new company Equitas.

PNAG believes the recovery plan is unfair to names who have continued to meet cash calls from Lloyd's and trade on in the market after 1992 - the cut-off for reinsurance into Equitas.

David Rowland, the Lloyd's chairman, has written to names, in a letter dated 8 August, reiterating his "regret" that PNAG has proceeded to apply for a judicial review.

He repeated that Lloyd's could not improve further on a £3.2bn settlement offer to names. Lloyd's plans to send further details to names on Monday.

They will receive a breakdown of how personal stop loss policies have affected their final bills and learn the size of their funds at Lloyd's as of 12 July - assets they have pledged

in backing business underwritten at the market.

The Association of Lloyd's Members plans to release on Monday a report from solicitors Wilde Sappe, expected to back key elements of the recovery plan including Equitas.

Rebel names are furious that, having shouldered years of losses due to asbestos claims and the like, they will be left out in the cold by the settlement.

Names have until 28 August to accept or reject the settlement offer and until 30 September to pay final bills.



David Rowland: Expressed regret at names' litigation

Franc sinks on EMU fears

JOHN WILLCOCK

The French franc came under renewed pressure yesterday as rumours flew around dealing desks that France would fail to meet the criteria for European monetary union on time.

Institutions switched assets into mark bonds, which are seen as a safe haven in times of uncertainty, particularly when EMU looks vulnerable.

Large foreign sell orders forced the franc to a new four-month low of 3.4180 against the mark yesterday. Anti-franc sentiment was fanned by a number of rumours - that the French Prime Minister Alain Juppe might resign; and that the Governor of the Banque de France, Jean-Claude Trichet, might be investigated over a past banking scandal.

There was intense speculation in Paris that a government move to prosecute former bosses of state-owned bank Crédit Lyonnais might tar Mr Trichet.

Finance Minister Jean Arthuis said on Thursday he was seeking the prosecution of former bosses at Crédit Lyonnais on the basis of fresh information on losses which drove the state-owned bank to the brink of bankruptcy.

This comes on top of a nationwide debate on whether France should stick to attaining the Maastricht criteria for EMU by 1999, or cut interest rates and go for growth.

Single currency aspirants must hold their budget deficits at or below 3 per cent of gross domestic product to qualify for a European monetary union on time on 1 January 1999. Members are to be selected in early 1998 on the basis of 1997 data.

On the political front, as director of the Treasury which Credit Lyonnais made some of the largest losses in French corporate history, Mr Trichet was in charge of supervising the state-owned banks. He says he was the first to alert the government to the problems, calling for an investigation in a letter in October 1991.

Never the less, French newspapers saw the prosecution call partly as an attempt by President Jacques Chirac to destabilise or humble Mr Trichet, whose caution in cutting interest rates was criticised by the President last month.

Conservative government supporters want to stimulate a stagnant economy in time for 1998 parliamentary elections and blame Mr Trichet's orthodoxy for record unemployment.

STOCK MARKETS					
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1996 High	1996 Low
FTSE 100	3810.70	-0.70	-0.0	3857.10	3632.30
FTSE 250	4324.50	+5.80	+0.1	4368.80	4015.30
FTSE 350	1907.30	+0.30	+0.0	1945.40	1816.60
FT Small Cap	2121.04	+2.41	+0.1	2244.36	1964.06
FT All Share	1884.86	+0.43	+0.0	1924.17	1781.95
New York	5711.64	-1.85	-0.0	5778.00	5032.94
Tokyo	20551.05	-180.26	-0.9	22666.80	19734.70
Hong Kong	11104.03	-60.33	-0.5	11594.99	10204.87
Frankfurt	2525.64	-12.51	-0.5	2583.49	2253.36

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES					
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	Long Term
UK	5.75	6.00	7.75	8.08	7.90
US	5.34	5.81	6.45	6.61	6.73
Japan	0.38	0.84	3.20	3.09	-
Germany	3.28	3.44	6.27	6.73	6.98

BOND YIELDS					
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	Long Term
UK	5.75	6.00	7.75	8.08	7.90
US	5.34	5.81	6.45	6.61	6.73
Japan	0.38	0.84	3.20	3.09	-
Germany	3.28	3.44	6.27	6.73	6.98

CURRENCIES					
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1996 High	1996 Low
\$/£	1.5495	-0.016	-1.03	1.5773	1.5439
\$/¥	1.5495	-0.056	-3.62	1.5720	1.5439
DM/£	2.2907	-0.070	-3.05	2.2808	2.2808
DM/¥	167.624	-10.089	-6.02	167.872	167.872
\$/DM	0.644	-0.002	-0.31	0.6454	0.644
\$/DM	0.644	-0.002	-0.31	0.6454	0.644

سكدا من الرصين

market report/shares

DATA BANK

FT-SE 100

3810.7 -0.7

FT-SE 250

4324.5 +5.9

FT-SE 350

1907.3 +0.3

SEAQ VOLUME

525.1m shares,

30,719 bargains

Gifts Index

9.18 -0.06

SHARE SPOTLIGHT

share price, pence

520

500

480

460

440

420

400

380

360

340

320

F M A M J J A

BP strikes new heights as crude price inspires oil firms

British Petroleum, only four years ago bumping along at a miserable 187p, flared 9.5p to a peak of 613.5p.

US buying was thought to be responsible for the display of strength. Figures earlier this week were said to be the main influence although the firmness of the crude price was clearly an influence.

The shares are the cheapest of the international oil giants. And their appeal is strengthened by the prospect of sharp dividend increases and a possible share buyback within the next year.

Other oils drew strength from the crude performance which ignored the growing prospect of Iraq commencing exports in the next few weeks following the UN Sanctions Committee's adoption of the oil-for-food requirements.

Burmah, helped by an overnight American buying order, added 22p to 1,020p

and Enterprise Oil improved 7p to 488p.

Encouraged by the bubbling oil display, the rest of the stock market staged a late bid to make it eight wins in a row. It just failed to achieve such a remarkable sequence, last managed three years ago.

The FT-SE 100 index finished only 0.7 points down at 3,810.7 after 3,793.9. Trading was again thin with most investors, big and small, content to bide their time.

BSkyB, the satellite television station, broke through the 500p barrier for the first time, gaining 8p to 507p. James Capel and Barclays de Zoete Wedd made buy signals. Year's figures are due later this month with a near £100m gain to £256m expected.

BT was little changed at 376p after a strong display this week. The shares have responded positively to the group's grudging acceptance of



MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year

the latest Ofel proposals which allow it to avoid a distracting and potentially damaging referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

New issue Sovernet, the supermarket chain, managed to cast a little embarrassment in the direction of its advisers, Kleinwort Benson, touching 163p and closing at 159p in busy trading. Kleinwort was twice forced to lower the flotation price, eventually settling on 145p.

Kwik Save fell 9p to 415p. Shares of the discount group are regarded as the most likely casualty of Sovernet which is on a much lower rating and could be expected to attract switching from Kwik Save.

Hanson's rally continued with the price edging ahead to 168.5p. But BTR was stuck at its warrants exercise level, unchanged at 258p.

Reports of a cable merger between Nyx and Telewest created a fission of excitement. The theory is the hard pressed cable companies believe their disappointment at the poor reception they have received would be eased if they pooled their resources. It was enough to lift Nyx 5p to 93p and Telewest 3p to 142p. Nyx has been as high as 147p in the past year, Telewest touched 195p.

Cardcast and Card Clear, involved in card payment and fraud prevention, confirmed

they were actually talking merger. Card Clear, 5p firmer at 43p, is expected to make a share exchange offer for Cardcast, up 5p to 88p.

After Thursday's blurb of excitement, insurances came down to earth with United Friendly off 34p to 805p and its proposed partner, Refuge, down a further 15p to 393p. London & Manchester fell 15p to 366p and Britannic 22p to 741p.

Boosey & Hawkes ended the week on a high note. The shares jumped 68p to 798p after a US court ruled in B&H's favour in its dispute with Disney over the copyright for the *Fantasia* video. Earlier this week the company paid £17.9m for a reed maker. On Monday the shares were 665p.

Ladbroke was the best performing blue chip as takeover speculation returned. The shares climbed 4.5p to 197p in brisk trading. A deal with

Hilton Hotels Corporation is still the market's favourite bet with Bass expected to be pre-occupied with Carlsberg Tetley and out of the running.

British Steel fell 3.5p to 178.5p as SBC Warburg remained negative and James Capel cautioned lower Leases Industries 2p to 231p.

Pan Andean Resources Bolivian oil hopes lifted the shares 7p to a 123p peak and African Gold, also from the John Teeling stable, improved 2p to 17p.

AG, a maker of reels for the storage of cables and ropes, firmed to 157p on Williams de Broe support. Profits are expected to have risen nearly £500,000 to £3.5m in the year just ended with £4m likely this year.

Cowie, the transport group, was little changed at 361p despite a buy note from Wisespeke suggesting the shares could hit 450p in the next year.

TAKING STOCK

JAIM's only Nasdaq share, Electronic Retailing Systems, is enjoying a spectacular run this month. The US supplier of electronic shelf labelling systems arrived at 145p when Henderson Crosthwaite placed shares to raise £7.7m. After a subdued few weeks the shares have come to life and yesterday jumped 25p to 198p. The group's products allow price changes and stock information to be transmitted from the shelf and a store's central computer.

Stories persist Whitbread has another significant takeover bid on its menu. The leisure giant is in the process of paying £133m for the Pelican restaurant chain and there is talk it could descend on Harry Ramsden's, the famous fish and chip chain with a market capitalisation of £33m. Ramsden's rose 10p to 380p.

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Alcoholic Beverages						
1000	980	Breweries						
1000	980	Distillers						
1000	980	Wine						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Banks, Merchant						
1000	980	Insurance						
1000	980	Finance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Banks, Retail						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Breweries, Pubs & Rest						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Building/Construction						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Electricity						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Electronics						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Food Manufacturers						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Gas Distribution						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Health Care						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Engineering						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Chemicals						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Index-linked						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Shorts						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Medicine						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Household Goods						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Insurance						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Leisure & Hotels						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Life Assurance						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Investment Companies						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Investment Trusts						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Government Securities						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Longs						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Medicine						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Longs						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Medicine						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Longs						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Medicine						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Longs						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Medicine						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Household Goods						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Insurance						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Price	Chg	Vol
1000	980	Leisure & Hotels						
1000	980	Finance						
1000	980	Insurance						

1000	980	Life Assurance						
1000	980	Life Assurance						
99	97	Rollac	224	-1	16	20573889		
98	97	Rollac	224	-2	31	20373889		
95	90	Rubicon	178	-	43	1606		
92	90	Sawyer Eng	98	+2	40	15726089		
90	88	Sawyer Eng	98	-1	21	20524089		
88	80	Sibona	503	+7	3	2024089		
84	84	Sibona	503	-1	3	2024089		
80	78	Smith Inds	737	-3	25	2184050		
80	80	Spokane	718	-1	21	2304089		
80	80	Spokane Ind	718	-1	21	2304089		
80	80	Spokane Ind	718	+2	33	1844227		
80	80	Tuckey Coal	45	-	3	1942227		
71	72	Tropic	13	-	34	2622089		
70	70	Weyerle	159	+	52	114392		
70	71	Mid Industries	21	-	43	1354089		
70	70	Vision Int	37	-	1	932		

try to extinguish the Cigar that has lasted a heck of a long time in California today. The 17-year-old colt has already won four of his 17th straight races in the Pacific Classic at Del Mar, which will make him, mathematically, the greatest 17-year-old of the 20th century, writes Howard Edmondson.

Much of the build-up to the Grade One race has included interviews with opposing trainers, showing how they would like to see the moustache-twiddling firebreather off the stage after

they have ruined Cigar's record. Such an eventuality is tantamount to fantasy.

Cigar is likely to start as short as a 1-5 shot, despite the fact that his trainer, Bill Mott, continues to grumble about his horse's intermittent hoof problems. The quest for the 17th and the milestone has been made far easier by the career-ending injury at Del Mar this week of Soul Of The Matter, who ran Cigar so close in the Dubai World Cup in March.

19 S. McDowell 10 12 D. Miles M. Carson (4) 10
 20 (23) Mrs M. Rensley 6 11 13. Mr S. Sellers 8
 21 G. Baiding 5 11 10. Mr A. Baiding 1 V
 22 (9) J. L. Ewe 5 10 13. Miss Olan Jones 3
 23 Chapman 1 10 7. Miss R. Clark 8 8
 24 M. Hammond 5 10 8. Mr C. Bonner 4
 25 J. P. Jacob 3 10 1. Mrs L. Pearson 2
 26 R. McElroy 5 9 7. Mrs C. Williams (4) 9 8
 27 N. Chambers 4 9 7. Miss C. McDaniel (4) 9 8
 28 (1822) J. Goble 10 9 7. Miss F. Roberts 7
 29 18 declared.
 Handicap weights: Jackson Set 2B, Kingston

1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2172, 2173, 2174, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, 2179, 2180, 2181, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2187, 2188, 2189, 2190, 2191, 2192, 2193, 2194, 2195, 2196, 2197, 2198, 2199, 2200, 2201, 2202, 2203, 2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209, 2210, 2211, 2212, 2213, 2214, 2215, 2216, 2217, 2218, 2219, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2223, 2224, 2225, 2226, 2227, 2228, 2229, 2230, 2231, 2232, 2233, 2234, 2235, 2236, 2237, 2238, 2239, 2240, 2241, 2242, 2243, 2244, 2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2255, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2264, 2265, 2266, 2267, 2268, 2269, 2270, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276, 2277, 2278, 2279, 2280, 2281, 2282, 2283, 2284, 2285, 2286, 2287, 2288, 2289, 2290, 2291, 2292, 2293, 2294, 2295, 2296, 2297, 2298, 2299, 2300, 2301, 2302, 2303, 2304, 2305, 2306, 2307, 2308, 2309, 2310, 2311, 2312, 2313, 2314, 2315, 2316, 2317, 2318, 2319, 2320, 2321, 2322, 2323, 2324, 2325, 2326, 2327, 2328, 2329, 2330, 2331, 2332, 2333, 2334, 2335, 2336, 2337, 2338, 2339, 2340, 2341, 2342, 2343, 2344, 2345, 2346, 2347, 2348, 2349, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2358, 2359, 2360, 2361, 2362, 2363, 2364, 2365, 2366, 2367, 2368, 2369, 2370, 2371, 2372, 2373, 2374, 2375, 2376, 2377, 2378, 2379, 2380, 2381, 2382, 2383, 2384, 2385, 2386, 2387, 2388, 2389, 2390, 2391, 2392, 2393, 2394, 2395, 2396, 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2402, 2403, 2404, 2405, 2406, 2407, 2408, 2409, 2410, 2411, 2412, 2413, 2414, 2415, 2416, 2417, 2418, 2419, 2420, 2421, 2422, 2423, 2424, 2425, 2426, 2427, 2428, 2429, 2430, 2431, 2432, 2433, 2434, 2435, 2436, 2437, 2438, 2439, 2440, 2441, 2442, 2443, 2444, 2445, 2446, 2447, 2448, 2449, 2450, 2451, 2452, 2453, 2454, 2455, 2456, 2457, 2458, 2459, 2460, 2461, 2462, 2463, 2464, 2465, 2466, 2467, 2468, 2469, 2470, 2471, 2472, 2473, 2474, 2475, 2476, 2477, 2478, 2479, 2480, 2481, 2482, 2483, 2484, 2485, 2486, 2487, 2488, 2489, 2490, 2491, 2492, 2493, 2494, 2495, 2496, 2497, 2498, 2499, 2500, 2501, 2502, 2503, 2504, 2505, 2506, 2507, 2508, 2509, 2510, 2511, 2512, 2513, 2514, 2515, 2516, 2517, 2518, 2519, 2520, 2521, 2522, 2523, 2524, 2525, 2526, 2527, 2528, 2529, 2530, 2531, 2532, 2533, 2534, 2535, 2536, 2537, 2538, 2539, 2540, 2541, 2542, 2543, 2544, 2545, 2546, 2547, 2548, 2549, 2550, 2551, 2552, 2553, 2554, 2555, 2556, 2557, 2558, 2559, 2560, 2561, 2562, 2563, 2564, 2565, 2566, 2567, 2568, 2569, 2570, 2571, 2572, 2573, 2574, 2575, 2576, 2577, 2578, 2579, 2580, 2581, 2582, 2583, 2584, 2585, 2586, 2587, 2588, 2589, 2590, 2591, 2592, 2593, 2594, 2595, 2596, 2597, 2598, 2599, 2600, 2601, 2602, 2603, 2604, 2605, 2606, 2607, 2608, 2609, 2610, 2611, 2612, 2613, 2614, 2615, 2616, 2617, 2618, 2619, 2620, 2621, 2622, 2623, 2624, 2625, 2626, 2627, 2628, 2629, 2630, 2631, 2632, 2633, 2634, 2635, 2636, 2637, 2638, 2639, 2640, 2641, 2642, 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646, 2647, 2648, 2649, 2650, 2651, 2652, 2653, 2654, 2655, 2656, 2657, 2658, 2659, 2660, 2661, 2662, 2663, 2664, 2665, 2666, 2667, 2668, 2669, 2670, 2671, 2672, 2673, 2674, 2675, 2676, 2677, 2678, 2679, 26

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sport

CHARITY SHIELD: Double winners back at Wembley

Shearer ensures global interest

Alan Shearer and the Toon Army are in disagreement. As far as Shearer is concerned, tomorrow's FA Charity Shield is an irrelevance compared to next week's Premiership opener at Goodison Park.

Tell that to the Newcastle supporters. They were looking forward to this match even before Shearer came home. It is 20 years since they have been to Wembley, long enough to persuade many to cheer Manchester United's double because it meant Newcastle, as Premiership runners-up, would contest the Shield.

Newcastle's last Wembley memory does not quite date back as far as lace-up balls and waxed moustaches, but it was in the days when the Football League Cup was sponsored and Manchester City won trophies — they won that 1976 final through Dennis Tueart's spectacular overhead kick. Newcastle's last Wembley win was in lace-up times, 1955, when Jackie Milburn scored in the 3-1 FA Cup win over Manchester City.

It is the arrival of Milburn's latest successor, Shearer, which has lifted this match out of a private Novocastrian party to an international event. Manchester United may be so blasé about Wembley as to request less than a full ticket allocation but the rest of us want to see how Shearer settles in.

The player himself expects goals to be harder to come by. "With due respect to the lads at Blackburn it was my job to get the goals there," he said. "Here at Newcastle we have so many other players capable of scoring I might struggle to get anywhere near the 30 mark."

Who he plays with will be almost as interesting as how he plays. Les Ferdinand missed last night's match at Lincoln with flu but he is expected to start if fit. That could mean both Peter Beardsley and Faustino Asprilla beginning the season on the bench. It is unlikely that the latter, at least, will be prepared to stay there for long.

Newcastle have a point to prove in the traditional opener to the English season.

Glenn Moore reports

Philippe Albert, who has a back injury, is Newcastle's only other doubt although Robbie Elliott has been left out following his transfer talks with Blackburn Rovers.

Such is the fuss surrounding Shearer it is almost forgotten that the champions have been busy in the transfer market signing a clutch of foreigners. They include one of the stars of Euro 96, the Czech Karel Poborsky, and Johan Cruyff's son, Jordi.

They should all be on the bench tomorrow as Ferguson hinted that he would start this season with most of the team which finished the last. Paul Scholes is expected to replace Andy Cole, who has pneumonia, while Gary Neville may come into defence.

Ferguson warned that no one would retain their place all season. "I never use the term dropping players, but you have got to ease them in and out very carefully with a programme like the one we face."

Bryan Robson, when he was here, wanted to play in every match but it's just not possible. He used to argue with me but, looking back, I think he knows I was right. It is something that Jordi Cruyff already knows. The Premier League is just too hard and physical for players to play every game.

"Our intention is to go for everything this season. The European Champions' Cup is the pinnacle but we aim to stay near enough to the top of the league to make that a realistic aim in the last couple of weeks as well."

The FA Cup final winner, Eric Cantona, missed last season's Charity Shield — he was still hobbled — but has done well in the past. He scored one of the goals which beat Blackburn in 1994 and struck a stunning

hat-trick in Leeds' defeat of Liverpool two years earlier.

That fixture echoed the first Wembley Charity Shield in 1974. That meeting was made infamous by a fight between Kevin Keegan and Billy Bremner. Keegan, who threw off his shirt upon the inevitable dismissal, was reminded of it this week when he said "these fixtures are just friendlies".

"Not too friendly that day," he agreed. Neither was last year's snarling scrap between Everton and Blackburn.

This should be played in a better spirit though there is more at stake than just pride. Newcastle need a good performance. They have not beaten Manchester United in six matches since returning to the Premiership. As the champions showed last spring, when it comes down to the wire belief can tip the balance.

Manchester United have featured in 15 Shields, winning eight, including the first in 1908, and sharing four. Newcastle have lost four — including a 4-2 defeat to Manchester United in 1952 — and won once, in 1909, against Northampton.

In those days the match was between the winners of the Football League and the Southern League. It has come a long way since then, and raised millions of pounds for charity. Last year, which was poorly attended, raised £273,000. The 40-plus beneficiaries included the Birmingham Royal Institute for the Blind, Turning Point and the Police Benevolent Fund.

This is the most public of many charitable works by footballers and football clubs and the benefits will be gratefully received. Even so, given the game's current wealth, consideration should be given to turning over all the expected £1.2m receipts to charity. Only a third is passed on, Wembley (for whom charity always begins at home) take their customary third and the teams share a similar sum. In Newcastle's case, that should just about cover Shearer's big toe.



Gianluca Vialli, Chelsea's Italian striker (right), tussles with Sampdoria's Siniša Mihajlovic in Genoa on Thursday night. Vialli scored the opening goal after 17 minutes in Chelsea's 2-1 win over their hosts. Photograph: Reuter

Poles stung by Welsh courage

They were still not quite sure yesterday in the tiny mid-Wales village of Llansantffraid-ym-Mechain whether their No 1 European football hero was a plumber, a bricklayer or a night-club bouncer.

What they did know was that the local part-timers from the League of Wales have every chance of writing a chapter of football folklore when they fly out in two weeks' time for the second leg of their European Cup-Winners' Cup qualifying round tie against Ruch Chorzow, who have won the Polish League 14 times.

Llansantffraid's collection of £30-a-week footballers, held Chorzow to a 1-1 draw at the Racecourse Ground, Wrexham, on Thursday. Seven minutes from the end of a game in which the Poles promised to scrape through to a narrow victory by virtue of Dariusz Giesior's early header, the ball appeared — as if by magic — in the back of the Polish team's net.

Most of the 1,538 crowd who had left the tiny village near Oswestry deserted for the day believed big centre-half Arwel Jones — a plumber by day — had applied the crucial finishing touch in the 83rd minute, but the Icelandic referee ruled it was an own goal by Giesior.

Graham Breeze, Llansantffraid's manager and the local newspaper editor said: "We will go to Poland in two weeks' time with all guns blazing for the second leg. After this, I certainly can't see why we won't get a result."

"We are obviously up against a much better team. They are quicker and sharper than us, and when we went a goal down so early I feared the worst. But our boys just rolled up their sleeves and kept battling. And what happened shows what you can do if you really want it."

It will cost Llansantffraid (population of 954 at the last count) between £7,000 and £8,000 to get to Poland to face a crowd of 20,000. But with a UEFA grant and the takings from last night's crowd, they will, at least, break even.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

■ We are skint. We are desperate for money, we have no sponsorship and we are selling the gear to have a night out. There is nothing wrong with that after four years' hard training. Two of Britain's Olympic divers, **Tony Ali and Robert Morgan**, justifying selling their team kit on the streets of Atlanta.

■ The championship is over. I want to die. **Diego Maradona** after missing his fifth consecutive penalty, playing for Boca Juniors against Racing Club. Boca lost 1-0.

■ When I go there will be an enormous gaping hole that won't be filled. **Lindford Christie** complains about lack of government funding for his sport.

■ I'll always be a sheet metal worker's son from Newcastle. **Alan Shearer** introduces himself to the adoring Geordie public.

Nine on the mind of the Old Firm Plymouth sign Grobbelaar

Only in Glasgow would hundreds of people stand for hours staring at bricks. The Scottish League season, which kicks off today, started several weeks ago for some supporters of Celtic and Rangers: those fanatics who daily stand and stare at Celtic Park and Ibrox waiting for a glimpse of the heroes in whom they will invest their emotional well-being over the next 10 months.

This season, the equation is dominated by the number nine as Rangers attempt to equal Celtic's record nine-in-a-row runs of the 1960s and 70s. Celtic, equally, are determined to preserve their achievement.

The fans have jammed newspaper phone lines praising their favourites or sneering at the enemy, their reaction giving an indication that this will be for the big two, an intense season.

The best way, some would say, the only way, to assess the kind of campaign that awaits is to look to the turf accountants. Their figures have Rangers as favourites at 2-5 for the title, with Celtic a close second at 2-1.

The annual report on the finances of Scottish football, published this week by Price Waterhouse, shows Celtic and Rangers moving further away

from the rest of Scottish football, fuelling fears among the rest that the big two might never be caught again. Between them the Glasgow clubs boast almost as many seats as the other eight combined and, given their commercial bases, they can only continue to prosper.

Despite evidence to the contrary, which includes league records last season of Rangers and Celtic losing just seven games between them, Walter Smith, the Rangers manager, believes his side faces a tough time, however.

"It may be a case this year that there will be extra nerves and we have to handle a bit more pressure than would normally be there. The indica-

David McKinney asks: Is there life beyond Rangers and Celtic?

tions were that Celtic and ourselves were well ahead of the others, but no two seasons are the same. Hearts and Aberdeen had excellent European results in the week, indicating they could be up for the challenge. Rangers and Celtic have to maintain the standards they set last year, but that could be difficult.

"I hope the nine-in-a-row doesn't prey on the minds of my players, yet it's something we must use as a form of moti-

vation, although we have to watch we don't get too carried away."

On the other side of the city, Tommy Burns, the Celtic manager, who has brought in Paolo Di Canio and Alan Stubbs for the challenges ahead, has told the Celtic fans exactly what they wanted to hear. Before his friendly with Arsenal last week, Burns, addressing 47,000 supporters, told them: "We will give you it, but it will be a hard fight."

Burns, imbued with a sense of the club's history, is well aware of the importance of this season, as is Peter Grant, the midfield veteran, who assured supporters that the players will do everything in their power to win the Championship. We

know exactly what this means, and we are as determined as the supporters to make sure our record stays intact."

Beyond the Old Firm spotlight, the prospects for the other eight clubs would appear to involve little more than the chance of a good cup run, although Hearts have made reasonable strides towards becoming more competitive by the signing of three players, including Jeremy Goss from Norwich. Aberdeen, who can be expected to contest third place with Hearts, know they will have to improve on last season, when they finished 28 points behind Celtic. Ilian Kirakov, the Bulgarian international, will be their key man for the season.

The future will inevitably demand that Rangers and Celtic seek out new frontiers, such as a British League, and, given the increased fiscal pressures on all clubs, such a move could come sooner rather than later.

In the meantime if you feel particularly brave or foolish, a bet on Dunfermline, Kilmarnock or Raith Rovers to win the title would give a 500-1 return — the same price as confirmation of the existence of the Loch Ness Monster...

Bruce Grobbelaar, who is due to appear in court in January over match-fixing allegations, has joined Plymouth Argyle, writes Mark Barton.

The 38-year-old Zimbabwe international, who was released by Southampton this summer, has signed a 12-month contract. Grobbelaar, who made more than 600 appearances for Liverpool, will play for the newly promoted Second Division club against Manchester City in today's friendly match at Home Park.

Argyle's manager, Neil Warnock, was keen to sign him for what he expects to be a difficult season for Plymouth. "I realise he has got problems but what matters most is what he does on the pitch," Warnock said.

The problem the Leeds United manager, Howard Wilkinson, faces is that Tony Yeboah will not be doing anything on the pitch for a while. The Ghanaian international striker will undergo an exploratory operation early next week on the knee injury that kept him out of action last season. "It is not possible to say how many games Tony will miss," Wilkinson said. Motherwell's Paul Lambert

became another post-Bosman Scottish export yesterday when he joined the German champions, Borussia Dortmund, on a three-year contract after impressing their coach, Ottmar Hitzfeld, in two trial periods. Lambert left the Premier Division club on freedom of contract to move to the Continent.

Ivano Bonetti, the former Juventus and Torino midfielder, whose dressing-room row with the manager, Brian Laws, led to him leaving Grimsby Town, has signed a 12-month contract with Tranmere Rovers after weeks of talks.

The Wolves manager, Mark McGhee, expects right-back Serge Romano to sign a one-year contract at Molineux on Monday. Romano, who is available on a free transfer from Martigues, played on trial in Wolves' pre-season matches.

The Liverpool defender Neil Ruddock has been fined £2,000 by the FA's disciplinary committee and warned about his future conduct for exceeding 45 disciplinary points last season.

■ Aimé Jacquet, who coached France in Euro 96, will continue to lead them in the 1998 World Cup finals, which they host.

Like a good wine, or Gordon Strachan, Rothmans seems to get better with age, but it is not always in demand for reasons you might expect

This close season has been the closest ever. The curtain has been down just 41 days on Euro 96 and we are already gearing up for the "curtain raiser to the new season", as the hilling of tomorrow's Charity Shield reads. However, as those of us who earn our grubby shilling writing about the beautiful game will tell you, the real curtain raiser to every new season is the launch of the Rothmans Football Yearbook, now in its 27th edition.

Like a good wine, or Gordon Strachan, Rothmans seems to get better with age (last year it sold 37,000 copies and was on the best-seller list for six months), but it is not always in demand for the reasons you might expect. Charlie Buchan, then a football reporter on *The Guardian*, recalls this tale from his trip to Simferopol in March 1982 for the first leg of Aston Villa's European Cup tie with Dynamo Kiev (it was too cold in the Crimea to stage the game). "We were having a shot of vodka in a local bar before the game

and the owner was muttering to us. The Russians on the next table explained, in perfect English, that she was asking us not to smoke. It transpired this Russian had been living in Bolton and he ended up acting as our tour guide."

After the game (a 0-0 draw; Villa won the second leg 2-0 and went on to win the trophy) Buchan decided to thank the Russian for his hospitality by giving him a copy of *Rothmans*. "We met in nearby park [locals were not allowed in tourist hotels] and, as I was handing the book over, three policemen jumped out of the bushes and arrested him. The following day he contacted me to explain they had confiscated the book, before abandoning him at the opposite end of the city where there was no public transport."

It would be nice to think it was the Simferopol coppers' love of football that forced them to take such drastic measures to obtain a copy of *Rothmans*. The simple truth is that they thought Buchan was giving

the Russian a copy of the bible. Which, in a sense, he was. Because *Rothmans* is the football bible. In fact I would go so far as to say that those in the trade swear by it, use it as Jim Rosenthal put it at the launch on Thursday — "as a friend and an ally in times of need" (that is, lack of knowledge). In fact I heard "Where's the *Rothmans*?" so frequently during the season and find it is being used so often, that within weeks of each edition's launch, it has grown dog-eared and well-worn, its loose pages put back at random so that Port Vale's statistics appear next to Burnley's, or Oxford's fixtures end up next to Crewe's.

Such defacements seldom detract from *Rothmans*' appeal, however, even if some people do find strange uses for their copies. When I first met Walter Smith, the Rangers manager was dipping chunks of bread into a bowl of bright red tomato soup (a rather meagre meal given the grandiose surroundings of his Ibrox office) which was balanced

Olivia Blair



ON SATURDAY

precisely on top of a copy of *Rothmans*. It was not his usual use for the book, he assured me. Like most managers Smith would not be without it (although he obviously didn't spend his summer scouring the players listed in *Rothmans*, judging by Ibrox's latest recruits). David Pleat's use for the book is more basic: "If my wife has a headache," the Sheffield Wednesday manager says, "she'll take a pill. If I

have a headache, I read *Rothmans*." John Motson is a man with a greater need for *Rothmans* than most. In fact Motson was recently photographed for a newspaper article clad in trademark sheepskin jacket, clutching a copy of *Rothmans*. "It sums up what I think of the book," says the nearest thing to a human equivalent of *Rothmans*. "It's the first book I turn to; there's nothing else like it. It's a great compliment that others have tried to imitate it, and failed."

The BBC commentator boasts two complete sets of *Rothmans*, worth between £250-£300 each at today's prices. The most expensive and desirable edition is the first, which fetches up to £70; other editions in 1977/78, 1978/79, 1979/80 and 1980/81 sell for anything between £20 and £40. John Eastwood of the Extra Cover bookshop in London, NW5, says he recently sold a complete set to a man claiming to be America's only full-time soccer writer and another to a Chinese

man who introduced himself as "Peking's only British-speaking commentator..."

Not even *Rothmans*' executive editor, Jack Rollin, who has worked on the books since 1972, owns a complete set. Rollin first produced the editions on a lone typewriter; now he says he could not do it alone. He and his editor daughter, Glenda (a lifelong fan of the Leeds League Division One side Aldershot Town, sadly not granted much space in *Rothmans*) started work on the 27th edition three weeks before the 27th was even printed. "If you get behind, you're finished," Rollin admits. "From May onwards we work seven days a week."

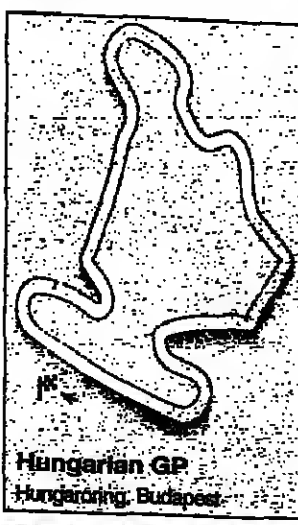
It is bang up-to-date, too. Alan Shearer's transfer, which took place three days before the edition was published, is included.

Generally each addition adheres to a tried and trusted format. When Rollin rang the changes last year by putting the players in an A-Z directory after the club listings, there

was an outcry. "We've never had such a huge response over anything before. The chairman of one First Division club rang me and said we'd lose the support of the industry that club subsequently rang me for the dates of the signings of six of their players so we couldn't have fallen too far from grace). I thought people who bought the book loved football generally, but it appears that most of them are just interested in reading about their club. Football has always been resistant to change, and *Rothmans* is no exception."

But as we start a new season, in which we have to get used to the Endcliffe Football League being Nationwide, and put up with Littlewoods being stuck in front of anything that used to be sacrosanct in the game, it is nice to know that one thing about *Rothmans* is never likely to change: its name. Few people ask to buy a copy of the *Rothmans Football Yearbook*, they simply ask for *Rothmans*. Anything else just isn't football...

Williams prepare for constructors' crown Salford close to realising Super dream



Motor racing
DERICK ALLSOP
reports from Budapest

The Ferrari was out in front unchallenged for much of yesterday's session, but the Williams closed in and ultimately edged ahead. The history of the grand prix world championship has been encapsulated in one hour's practice.

Tomorrow's Hungarian Grand Prix should confirm Williams' eighth constructors' championship, equalling Ferrari's record. That the Italian team have been there since the first season, 46 years ago, and the British half that time, moral-

ly tilts the balance in Williams' direction.

Williams-Renault require only two points to retrieve the crown from Benetton-Renault and since Damon Hill and Jacques Villeneuve, first and second in the drivers' championship, were first and third yesterday, it is reasonable to assume only breakdowns would prevent their getting them.

When Hill moved ahead of Michael Schumacher by 0.02sec, watching and savouring, as usual, from his wheelchair was Frank Williams, the man who abandoned a career as a quick yet erratic driver to set up his own team. His struggles in the early days are now

part of motor racing folklore: when his telephone line was cut off, he ran the business from a phone box.

Williams expressed surprise that he had "bumbled" all the way to Ferrari's landmark. "I'll have a drink of tea on that," he said yesterday. He was perhaps luckiest of all to be joined, in 1977, by an equally gifted, ambitious racing freak called Patrick Head, whose particular talent was designing cars.

The pair have been together ever since and, like most team men, they glean greater satisfaction from success in the constructors' championship than in the drivers' category. Williams, in particular, has always laid

stress on the contribution of his engineers and designers, and did so again yesterday, possibly a timely reminder as Hill endeavours to negotiate a new contract.

Williams said: "I'm not here for the driver's benefit. I'm here to enjoy myself and keep up my living. Drivers come and go but the team, hopefully, are here forever."

Williams has been confined to a wheelchair since a road accident, 10 years ago, but never relinquished his hold on team affairs. Some have suggested the disability threw his attention to the job into even sharper focus. "I've not been aware of that," he said. "The accident was a bit

like falling over and grazing your knee. You get up, dust yourself down and start again."

Here, on this tight, twisting circuit, where overtaking is well nigh impossible, Schumacher, the reigning champion, just might have a chance. If he can make the front row of the grid, if he can start well, if he can get to the first corner in front. If...

HUNGARIAN GRAND PRIX (Budapest) Provisional times after opening practice session: 1 D Hill (GB) Williams 1:21.146; 2 M Schumacher (GER) Ferrari 1:21.166; 3 J Villeneuve (CAN) Williams 1:21.352; 4 A Benetton (ITA) Benetton 1:22.017; 5 G Berger (AUT) Benetton 1:22.017; 6 J Agazzi (ITA) Benetton 1:22.017; 7 J Herbert (GB) Williams 1:22.017; 8 J Herbert (GB) Williams 1:22.017; 9 J Herbert (GB) Williams 1:22.017; 10 J Herbert (GB) Williams 1:22.017; 11 J Herbert (GB) Williams 1:22.017; 12 J Herbert (GB) Williams 1:22.017.

Salford close to realising Super dream

Rugby League

Andy Gregory and his Salford Reds are set to realise their Super League dream. They need just one point from their last three games to make sure of another First Division championship, and they will do that tomorrow if they avoid defeat at home to the second-placed Keighley Cougars.

While Keighley and several other First Division clubs are applying to be fast-tracked into the top flight, Salford have left no doubt as to their credentials to join the big boys. The Reds finished top of the First Division in the centenary season, but the Rugby Football League had already stated there would be no promotion at the end of that last winter campaign.

So Salford did not go up and coach Gregory, the former Great Britain star, said: "That was possibly one of the biggest disappointments of my career as a player and as a coach. But I couldn't show the players I was upset. When you're a player you can show your emotions but, as a coach, if I was to let my head go down, it would have affected the players as well."

"This will make up for that disappointment if we do it this time, and it's in our hands now. I know Keighley will be coming to try to spoil the party," Gregory added. "I know we've got a bit of rebuilding to do for Super League. I've got to make sure that, once we are in Super League, we'll stay there."

The relegation places from the First Division could also be decided this weekend, with Batley and Rochdale likely to drop. Ambitious Keighley Cougars are considering a change of

ground and name as they aim for the Super League next season. The First Division outfit, who seem certain to miss out on the one automatic promotion place, could move in with Burnley FC and play their first-team games at Turf Moor to achieve their dream. If that happened, they would look at the possibility of becoming the Rams. Cougars in coincide with the switch of venues.

Keighley's plan was put to the chief executive of the Rugby Football League, Maurice Lindsay, in a meeting at the sport's headquarters in Leeds. The Cougars chief executive, Kevin Halliday-Brown, confirmed yesterday: "We want to make a submission for fast-tracking, but we are not going to be able to bring this club up to the standard required in 'Framing the Future'."

That's the initial problem so far as the club's future. To secure fresh ownership of this ground here, we have to consider playing our first-team games somewhere else.

"An alternative proposal was put to Maurice Lindsay, suggesting that we retain Cougar Park as our administrative headquarters and develop it as a sort of centre of excellence for youth development. We would play A-team and Academy games here, with our Super League games being played at an alternative venue, possibly Turf Moor."

"Burnley have excellent facilities and, if we can get permission to play our games there, we feel there is a possibility of attracting probably the biggest attendance in Super League."

"The current capacity at Cougar Park falls slightly below the minimum required, which is 10,000, and we've got an old stand which doesn't provide enough seats or enough cover."

Sons of Kentucky playing on pride

It is 44 years since big-time golf came to the Bluegrass State, which is respectively eight and six years before the Kentuckians Kenny Perry and Russ Cochran were born. If the locals of Louisville are enjoying their first glimpse of the Tour for a generation at the US PGA, Perry and Cochran are enjoying the novel experience of playing in front of enthusiastic support.

There were still a couple of hundred people around just before 9pm on Thursday as Perry finished his storm-interrupted first round. With dusk falling fast, the hoister to halt play for the evening had already gone as he approached his second shot to the last. "I really didn't want to come out in the morning just to hit on a shot," Perry hit a four-iron into the front bunker, came out to 30 feet and rolled in the putt. The birdie-four equalled the course record of six-under 66 by the Valhalla designer Jack Nicklaus and Larry Mize. "I couldn't see a lot," Per-

Andy Farrell meets two locals shining in a state starved of golf

ry said. "With my contacts, when it gets overcast and late in the day I struggle to see the ball and I can't read the greens as well. My caddy helped me over the last few holes and at the last I knew I broke a lot from left to right. I just picked a spot and wanted to lag it down there. It fell in on the back side of the hole."

Born in Elizabethtown, Perry lives in Franklin, a town of 10,000 people around 120 miles south of Louisville, and celebrates his 36th birthday today. A former Kentucky High School student who has won three times on the Tour, Perry designed, built, owned and operates his own course, Country Creek GC, in his home town. He also holds the course record there. "It's a little bit of a different golf

course to Valhalla. I shot 60 on it one time," Perry said.

It is also different getting to play in a major championship in front of his home fans. "They are living and dying on every shot you hit, and so am I. It's pretty nerve-racking. It's not to finally get a tournament in Kentucky. You saw how they all turned out for the practice rounds. This state has been starved of golf. To win a major in my own backyard would be the icing on the cake. I'd probably just quit; it wouldn't get any better than that."

Cochran agreed with the sentiment. After having to go back to the Qualifying School at the end of last year to regain his US Tour card, the left-hander from Paducah only qualified for the US PGA with a second-place finish two weeks ago. Yesterday he started his second round two strokes behind Perry, after the first-round leader added a level-par 72. Perry managed to get to eight under after 10 holes, but slipped back as the putts refused to drop.

"I was right on the deadline for getting in the tournament, so it is nice to be here," Cochran said. "You try to tell yourself that if you miss it is not much of a big deal; you'll get over it. But once you are here and you see so many friends pulling for you, it makes things a little more special. They don't hit any shots for you, but you put your heart and soul into every shot, and it really helps."



Kenny Perry acknowledges his local support in the US PGA at Valhalla. Photograph: AP

Lane happy with opt-out

Barry Lane, who pulled out of the US PGA Championship to play in the Hoge Brucke Austrian Open in Litschau, is convinced he made the right decision. Lane shot a six under par 66 yesterday for a two round aggregate of 135 and, though he is four shots behind the present leader, Spain's Juan

Piñero, who leads at 13 under par on 131, he is more than satisfied.

"I dropped out of the US PGA because I wasn't playing well enough," Lane said. "Here, I played two good rounds, which have given me a great deal of confidence."

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Agassi loses temper again

lems with his first serve throughout the match.

Agassi, criticised for his on-court behaviour at the Olympics, became infuriated when he lost the opening set, walking to his court-side chair and smashing his racket on the ground. His actions were unpunished by the umpire. "He should have had a point penalty for that, but everyone is afraid of him," O'Brien said. "He can do anything he wants; he's the king. That's just the way it is."

Agassi said he was glad he had lost his temper. "I wanted to win the match. I was trying to get angry to get myself back into it again. It was a good mad."

After a see-sawing first set, the top-seeded Monica Seles of the United States took control and defeated the ninth-seeded

Gabriela Sabatini of Argentina, 7-6 6-1, to move into the quarter-finals of the Canadian Open in Montreal. The No 2 seed, Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, of Spain, received treatment for a strained forearm muscle when leading 3-2 in the first set of her match against the South African, Amanda Coetzer. Sanchez Vicario won 7-5, 6-1.

Amy Frazier of the US, the No 13 seed, surprised by beating the No 8 seed, Myrle Pierce of France, 6-3, 6-3, and the sixth-seeded Magdalena Maleeva of Bulgaria won 6-3, 3-2 over Jennifer Capriati, who had to retire with a side strain.

After trailing 3-5 in the first set, Sabatini rallied to a 4-2 lead in the tie-break before going down. The second set, and the match, then fell quickly to Seles.

Mike Lennon was yesterday halfway to a fully paid trip to Key West, Florida, in winning the seven-race series for Melges 24s at Cowes Week. The national champion counted four firsts, two seconds and a third to take him to Barcelona in October for the deciding Gold Cup series, where he must beat Italy's Giorgio Zucchi, the winner of the first qualifier in Kiel, Germany.

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Lennon imagines more glory

Sailing

STUART ALEXANDER reports from Cowes

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to sail today, when another strong wind is forecast. "This year I was a lot more tense than last. The class is increasingly attractive to top sailors, including Olympic medalists, but the win here also puts me psychologically in a good position to defend the national championship at Brixham in a couple of weeks."

He expects Barcelona to be equally tough in the race to represent Europe against the Americans in January.

The committee failed to oote down the sportsboat finish, and also having a little difficulty finding the right course was Ludde Ingval's Nicorette - "a slight clerical error", the observer said. They sat on Mike Seles's Longboard, pouring dirty air down on her and forcing her back to third as the Russians

scored their first maxi win. Johnny Caulcutt's Maxipep finished second.

A fourth place was enough to give Nicorette the maxi prize for the week overall, but the Class One decider will be between two Baford-Hovison 41s. Glyn Williams made it two in a row yesterday as his twin, steered by Matt Humphries, pipped by 39 seconds Jocelyn Healey, with Gordon Maguire calling the shots.

Humphries praised the navigator Julian Salter for keeping them out of trouble as Silk 2 and Nigel Bramwell's Hawk both went around of Beaulieu. "It was a very tactical race and we sailed well," said Humphries, the skipper of Dolphin & Youth in the 1993-94 Whitbread.

Saints still on the march

St Helens arrive unscathed today at the end of a month on the road which their coach, Shaun McRae, always believed would make or break their Stoney Super League title ambitions, writes Dave Hadfield.

Saints have battled through major tests at London and Castleford with a determination that suggests that this evening's visit to Paris should be well within their compass. "Everybody would think this is the easiest of the four, but that could make it one of the toughest," McRae said.

He will be without Villa Matutia, possibly for the rest of the season, but Alan Hunt is fit to return, making it a straight swap at centre.

It is a mark of McRae's influence at Saints that today's opposing coach, John Kear, regards him as the difference between Paris having a chance of causing an upset and, realistically, having none.

"Before Shaun arrived, I would have thought we might have a go at them and get something," Kear said. "But I've studied the videos of the London and Castleford matches, where they really rolled their sleeves up and toughed it out - very un-Saints."

"That's the difference this season and why they will probably win the title."

The pressure is off Paris,

Kear feels, following Working-Town's defeat by Oldham last week. "I've had to play a much tighter style of rugby, which has not been in the French tradition, but which has been justified," he said. "Now I can ease up on them and let them off the reins just to see what might happen."

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British boats benefit from brinkmanship

British brinkmanship kept supporters on the edge of their seats at the World Championships in Motherwell yesterday, as three crews squeezed through the semi-finals while two more failed to qualify for tomorrow's finals.

The coxed four seemed set to give challenge Romania over the first 500m, only to drop away then lose out to France just after midway. They edged down with the line in sight to take the third qualification place.

The lightweight quadruple sculls fell behind at the start and won through to the final from another third-place finish, but only after a massive struggle with the American boat.

The closest call of the day came from the lightweight single sculler, Susan Appleboom, who plans to retire after these championships. Appleboom fell behind when she missed her second stroke at the start and at 800m was lying fourth. Only a final sprint over the final 200 metres brought her through to take third, and cost Poland from qualification with the line in sight.

Athletics

Some of the world's top athletes will be in Sarajevo for a solidarity meeting organised by an IAAF delegation which has travelled to Bosnia to help the details. It is scheduled for 9 September and is aimed at helping to rebuild the war-torn city.

Australian rules
APL's Fremantle 15.18 (106) in Collingwood 11.18 (82).

Baseball
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